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EU leaders talk of the ice melting

Blair: I want to forge a new Europe

FROM PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR, AND CHARLES BREMMER IN NOORDVIK

TONY BLAIR strode confidently on to the European stage yesterday and promised to use his landslide election victory to help the construction of a new Europe that would become popular with a doubting public.

The Prime Minister placed jobs at the top of the European Union agenda as he called for a "radical shift in Europe's horizons". He urged the EU to become less obsessed with itself and its institutions and more concerned with the issues that mattered to people, including public health, fraud and the environment.

He was determined, he said, that Britain should once more become a "major player" in Europe.

Mr Blair's call for a new Europe — effectively telling his fellow leaders that they should try to emulate his domestic achievement of creating new Labour — risked charges that Europe's "new boy" was trying to move too fast. He was, however, given a warm welcome by his fellow EU leaders, who were happy to leave the detailed negotiations for the Amsterdam summit in three weeks' time, when a new treaty charting Europe's progress in the next century will be signed.

Among some of the enthusiasm for Mr Blair was palpable. Goran Persson, the Swedish Prime Minister, said his arrival "could be the moment the ice melts in negotiations on Europe's

future". There was talk of "fog lifting in the English Channel" and even the old hands were happy to be impressed. Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, spoke optimistically about the chances of a deal at Amsterdam. "Mr Blair has not become obsessed with a single issue," Herr Kohl said. "Mr Blair sees himself in the middle of Europe and does not intend to be in a cut de sac."

Speaking at a press conference last night, the Prime Minister said there was a lot of hard bargaining to be done before a deal could be struck, but there was a general desire to reach an accord. "But it has got to be an agreement that properly protects British national interests and ensures that Britain is relevant to the people out there," Mr Blair said.

If Britain were to remain part of the EU, as it would under a Labour Government, "we have got to get the best deal for Britain out of Europe. That means Britain has a contribution to make to shape the future of Europe, not sitting there and resisting what everyone else does."

Mr Blair said there were hard things to resolve before Amsterdam, but "what people understand from this British Government is that we want a Europe that works — it works in British interests, but it works."

The Prime Minister believes that the biggest electoral win,

in modern political history, and the excitement it has generated across the Continent, has strengthened his campaign for a Europe shaped along British lines.

The mood of goodwill at Mr Blair's first European gathering did not prevent him laying down a series of key demands on border controls, fish quotas and jobs that will have to be met before he will sign up to the new treaty. In his first meeting on the summit's sidelines he told Jacques Santer, the European Commission President, that there would be serious political difficulties in the United Kingdom if the decision to sign up to the social chapter led to a flood of regulations that imposed new costs on British business.

It emerged later that Mr Blair is insisting that his demand for flexible labour markets, and his refusal to accept measures that threaten jobs, should be written into the Amsterdam treaty.

Mr Blair also told his EU counterparts that the summit must produce a package of measures to deal with the problem of fish quota hopping that has outraged British fishermen. Under an agreement that has been taking shape in recent days, boat owners with a licence to fish the British quota will be required to have a connection at a local port or region, and to land a certain amount of fish at British ports.

Blair welcomed, page 16



Katerina Koneva, the murdered girl. She had come to England for safety from the war in former Yugoslavia

Police hunt refugee child's killer

BY ADRIAN LEE

THE killer of Katerina Koneva was still at large last night as a school mourned the loss of one of its most gifted pupils.

Although English was her second language, the Macedonian-born 12-year-old, found strangled at her West London home, had established herself as one of the brightest among 1,400 children at Holland Park School in Kensington.

Flowers were placed at the spot where her father struggled with his daughter's

murderer, having apparently disturbed him a few minutes after Katerina was killed. The police, who said the killer's motive for entering the family's flat in Hammersmith was unclear, appealed for help in the streets through which Trajce Koneva, a mature student, pursued the intruder before he hijacked a car and escaped. Mr Konev returned to the flat to find his daughter dying.

It had been a new home for the family. Mr Konev, his wife Jacqueline, Katerina and her brother Kristian, six, were parted

when he left former Yugoslavia in 1993 to build a new life for his family. They were reunited two years later and, after a period living in hotels, believed that their problems were past.

Mary Marsh, Katerina's head teacher, said she was a special child. Always punctual and never off sick in eight months, she was the leader of the junior choir. The number of merit marks she had obtained was exceptional.

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INSIDE

McAliskey bail for baby's birth

Roisin McAliskey, the terrorist suspect, was released from Holloway jail and taken to the Whittington Hospital in north London to prepare for the birth of her baby.

Ms McAliskey, 25, is suffering from asthma. She had been granted bail by Mr Justice Hooper at a private hearing. The baby is two days overdue and is said to weigh 5lb.

Carer jailed for abusing boys

Roger Saint, 50, was jailed for 6½ years for what the judge called "persistent and determined" sexual abuse of young boys in his care over a 13-year period.

The Government is to close the loophole that allowed local authorities to continue sending him boys despite knowing that he had a conviction for indecent assault... Page 11

Football world club event

Fifa, the governing body of world football, is planning a world club championship to fill the idle month of July in years between World Cup and European championship summers.

The tournament would involve eight teams, including the champions from each of Fifa's six confederations... Page 52

Halifax shares may top 700p

Halifax members can expect the shares in their handout to rise above 700p on the first day of trading next week. A member receiving a minimum of 200 shares can therefore expect £1,400, more than £500 higher than the original estimate of £840... Page 27

Sir Stanley ill

Sir Stanley Matthews, 82, the footballer who won 54 England caps, was in comfortable condition in North Staffordshire Hospital after being admitted with chest pains.

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Driver using mobile phone is jailed after death crash

BY RICHARD FORD
HOME CORRESPONDENT

A DRIVER who caused the death of another motorist in a crash seconds after he made a call on his mobile telephone was jailed for six months yesterday.

Peter Mill, 34, a marketing manager, had been listening to his message service shortly before his vehicle crossed the road and collided head-on with a van on a bend near Bracknell, Berkshire. The

driver of the van, Geoffrey Martin, 54, died from the injuries in the crash in 1994.

Last night road safety campaigners hailed the sentence as a warning to motorists who use a mobile phone while driving and called for it to be made an offence. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents said that using a mobile phone while driving should become as unacceptable as drinking and driving.

Judge Lait told Mill, of Locks Heath, Southampton,

that he was not being sentenced on the basis that he had been using the mobile phone at the time of the car crash. Sentencing him at Reading Crown Court, he said: "There may well be speculation that using the mobile phone shortly before the bend was a factor which contributed to you not having proper control of your vehicle but it can be no more than suspicion."

Outside the court, Lynn Murray, 47, the dead man's widow, said: "I would hope



Lynn Murray yesterday

that the media coverage of this case would help to make people more aware of the dangers of using a hand-held phone while driving."

Bank Holiday sunshine spells misery for hayfever victims

BY HARVEY ELLIOTT
TRAVEL CORRESPONDENT

NINE million British hayfever sufferers face a sniffing, eye-streaming Bank Holiday weekend as hot weather brings the first pollen outbreak of the season.

Last night forecasters were predicting that the whole country would enjoy a sunny break, although the nights may be cold and even frosty. But the rise in temperature and therefore in pollen clouds

will inflict the first attack of the year on the 15 per cent of the population who suffer from hayfever.

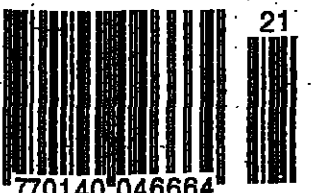
Much will depend on whether temperatures rise above 16C (60.8F), the point at which experts say pollen is most likely to burst out. Dr Jean Emberlin, of the Pollen Research Unit in Worcester, said: "Until now the unsettled weather prevented the pollen from lifting off the plants. Over the weekend, however, we are expecting the first dry

spell for a couple of weeks, with temperatures rising to about 18C (64.4F), which will liberate the pollen."

At least 1.5 million people are taking advantage of the Bank Holiday weekend and the start of half-term today to take longer breaks in the Mediterranean and Florida.

Eurostar expects to carry 60,000 passengers to Paris or Brussels, and the AA predicts congested roads.

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STAR KEITH ALLER ON LAD CULTURE AND BANNING THE SPICE GIRLS

Sinn Fein sweeps Unionists from power in Belfast

By NICHOLAS WATT
CHIEF IRELAND
CORRESPONDENT

SINN FEIN secured a huge vote in this week's local elections in Northern Ireland, ending more than a century of Unionist rule in Belfast and consolidating the success that the party scored on May 1.

In its most successful election result since the Troubles erupted in 1969, Sinn Fein increased its overall share of the vote by 4.7 percentage points at local level to 16.9 per cent. It was announced yesterday. Three weeks ago, republicans achieved a historic high in the general election with 16.1 per cent of the overall vote.

Sinn Fein invoked its success to demand a place at the multi-party talks when they resume on June 3. Gerry Adams, the party's president, said: "This election sends a very clear message that our strategy is being endorsed. The British Government should recognise that and treat Sinn Fein on the same basis as every other party."

The Prime Minister, who allowed Sinn Fein to meet civil servants in Belfast this week, will remain adamant that republicans can only join the Stormont talks after an unequivocal IRA ceasefire. But ministers will be acutely aware that Sinn Fein is a potent political force which can no longer be dismissed as marginal.

Protestant voters stayed away from Wednesday's polls while nationalists turned out in record numbers. Unionists looked on in despair as they lost control of Belfast City Council — seen as the bastion of Protestant rule in Ulster — and councils in Fermanagh, Strabane and Cookstown.

The loss of Belfast is immensely symbolic for Unionists. They uneasily eyed jubilant Sinn Fein opponents at the count in Belfast City Hall as republicans gained three seats to become the joint largest party with the Ulster Unionists. A strong performance by the Social Democratic and Labour Party and the Alliance Party meant that Unionists lost overall control of the council by one seat. The result paved the way for the first nationalist Lord Mayor of Belfast since the city was granted its Royal Charter in 1888.

In Londonderry, Sinn Fein captured three seats to end the SDLP's domination of the council.

Sinn Fein achieved such a strong vote throughout Northern Ireland by convincing thousands of nationalists to vote for the first time. The republican vote was also boosted by the tradition of "vote early, vote often". As the SDLP and the Ulster Unionists joined together to criticise Sinn Fein, the Chief Electoral Officer said there had been a "planned campaign of malpractice". Pat Bradley did not name any parties, but said there had been an abuse of postal and proxy votes.

Unionist leaders said that their traditional supporters had stayed at home because they felt alienated from the political process.



Mo Mowlam speaking to reporters with Senator Edward Kennedy during her visit to Washington yesterday

Mowlam suggests US visa for Adams if IRA calls a ceasefire

FROM TOM RHODES
IN WASHINGTON

MO MOWLAM risked fresh controversy in Washington yesterday when she suggested that the American Government should grant Gerry Adams a new visa as soon as the IRA declared a ceasefire.

The Northern Ireland Secretary said that it was a matter for the Clinton Administration, but saw the possibility of a visit by the Sinn Fein President as helpful to the process. "If there is an IRA ceasefire, then I think an invitation would help," she said. "If there is not a ceasefire, I'm not sure it would be a terribly helpful step. But if there is no undue delay, I think that would be a possible step."

Dr Mowlam, in Washington for two days of talks with the Clinton Administration and members of Congress, eschewed the hard line taken by the Tories over fundraising by Sinn Fein in America. "I would be happier if people knew what they were raising funds for, but it is a free country," she said.

Portraying the Labour Government as

a new broom, and Northern Ireland peace as a firm priority, Dr Mowlam is urging the Administration to maintain a solid presence in the Ulster process.

The White House has been eager for an early visit by Dr Mowlam and, after the Prime Minister's speech last week in which he offered Sinn Fein the chance to meet government officials in advance of an IRA ceasefire, Clinton aides said there was a new sense of hope.

After meeting Senators Edward Kennedy and Christopher Dodd, both influential in the Irish-American lobby, Dr Mowlam was holding talks with Samuel Berger, the National Security Adviser, and Strobe Talbott, the Deputy Secretary of State. Her mission was designed to bring dual pressure on Sinn Fein from both the Administration and Congress for a meaningful ceasefire and from leading congressmen to convince the nationalist communities in Northern Ireland of the need for a peaceful marching season.

After the dramatic visit to Ireland by President Clinton in 1995 and the subsequent resumption of violence by the IRA,

the Administration appeared to have put the Ulster process on a back burner. The departure of two key American negotiators in Ireland seemed to emphasise Mr Clinton's fear that further involvement would be politically risky.

But the White House yesterday adopted a tone of cautious optimism for the future. "In terms of actual specific steps that we will be taking that will probably have to wait until after the Irish elections," one official said. "But already there is a sense of hopefulness of improvement. Today we are brainstorming with Dr Mowlam on ways to move forward."

Several influential congressmen yesterday urged President Clinton to make Northern Ireland peace a priority at his meeting next week with Tony Blair at the European summit in The Hague.

The best hope for progress in Ireland rests with the role of honest broker in the conflict, read a statement issued by the group, which included Ben Gilman and Peter King, Republicans who exert a strong influence among Irish-Americans.

Rothermere hints at Mail reversal

By CAROL MIDGLEY, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

VISCOUNT Rothermere, the proprietor of the *Daily Mail*, yesterday indicated that the newspaper may change its traditional support for the Conservatives to reflect the "new mood" of its readers.

Lord Rothermere, who on Wednesday joined the Labour benches in the House of Lords, said a different political view could be necessary if readers thought the paper was "getting out of date".

He also backed Labour plans to scrap hereditary peers' voting rights. Lord Rothermere, who inherited his title from his father in 1978, said on Radio 4's *The World at One*: "I am a democrat and I believe in democracy. The world moves forward... Nobody has a hereditary right to govern."

Asked whether Paul Dacre, Editor of the *Mail*, would be allowed to continue the

paper's Eurosceptic line, Lord Rothermere said: "It is a free country and he is entitled to his views and to express them. But, of course, if they start to affect the circulation that will be different."

A recent study by *The Spectator* found that 29 per cent of *Daily Mail* readers had voted Labour, a 15.5 per cent swing.

Lord Rothermere said Labour was carrying out policies that the Conservative Party should have put through before its election defeat, like helping small businesses and "taking the right attitude in Europe". He described Tony Blair as "extremely astute and tremendously energetic".

"What he is doing so far is what the Tory Government should have done and he is really quite a good modern Conservative. He's a modern man."

Blowing her top in front of the press

By ANDREW PIERCE, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Northern Ireland Secretary, who has made infamy her trademark as the first woman to have her hair cut off at a press briefing.

Ms Mowlam removed the blond wig halfway through a sentence about her hopes for improved relations between the Government and the Clinton Administration. Ms Mowlam, 47, the first woman in the Cabinet, placed the wig on her desk and kept talking on the eve of her tour of Washington yesterday.

Ms Mowlam, who had complained it was getting stuffy in her London office, said at the meeting on Thursday: "I am going to take my hair off. I don't care about press. I have

had enough of it today. I'm in a mood. I have had a bad start to the day." Edith Lederer, who represented Associated Press, said: "Without skipping a beat, she then outlined what the US can do to help the Labour Government bring peace to Northern Ireland."

Ms Mowlam, who is recovering from treatment for a benign brain tumour, had enjoyed a flying start as Northern Ireland Secretary. But her day went wrong when she was subjected to a tirade of criticism from the Ulster Unionists after she had warned them that they faced exclusion from the peace process if they opposed Sinn Fein's entry into peace talks.

She told the American correspondents: "Without the



Sir Patrick sedate style has been overturned

Unionists in, it won't be a very meaningful talks process, but if we are going to go forward we have to make it clear that no one has a veto." The multiparty talks resume on

June 3, chaired by George Mitchell, the former US Senator, whom she praised for doing "a lot to keep the peace process going".

Ms Mowlam, who put on weight after taking steroids, lost all her hair after radiotherapy treatment. It was growing back, but not quickly enough, as the American press corps discovered.

She admitted that she was still not used to wearing the wig because when she gestulates, it moves. "My real problem is holding on to my wig getting in and out of helicopters," she said.

Ms Mowlam won many friends in Northern Ireland within hours of taking up her post when she staged an impromptu walkabout, embracing children and pensioners. Her style is in contrast to

the vice-regal sedateness of her pin-striped predecessor, Sir Patrick Mayhew, whose clipped tones chimed perfectly with the turrets and battlements of Stormont Castle which is her office in Ulster.

When the non-malignant tumour was diagnosed, Ms Mowlam told only a few friends. She coped until the tabloids ran a series of stories about her two-stone increase in weight and one columnist likened her to an "only slightly effeminate Gordie trucker".

It was after that she revealed that she was wearing a wig and had been on a course of steroids. She said this week that the extra weight was beginning to fall away. "I am feeling in good nick," she told the American journalists. "When I get my hair back, I'll be there."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Assisted places pledge 'broken'

Independent schools yesterday accused the Government of breaking a pre-election pledge to honour subsidised places at preparatory schools after the Education Bill indicated that assisted places would cease to be funded when the child is 11, even though 2,000 children in the scheme were not due to leave prep school until the age of 13.

Peter Kilfoyle, a Labour education spokesman, had said before the election that it would continue until 13. David Woodhead, director of the Independent Schools Information Service, said their education would be disrupted.

School strike

Teachers at a school where pupils ran amok after five staff were sacked because of budget cuts voted to go on strike. The teachers at the Frank Montgomery School at Sturry near Canterbury decided in a secret ballot organised by their union, the NASUWT, to begin industrial action after half-term.

Prison stalker

A stalker was given a further three years in jail for terrorising his victim after being sent to prison. Andrew Haywood, 28, formerly of Nottingham, admitted sending a Christmas card containing the words "rest in peace" to his victim, a nurse, the day after he was jailed last year for four years.

Curb on faxes

The sending of unsolicited direct mail by fax to people's homes is to be curbed under new guidelines. The Direct Marketing Association has drawn up a code of conduct, under which anyone who no longer wishes to be bombarded with faxes can register their names on a list called the Fax Preference Service.

Ex-PC fined

A former policeman was found guilty at Stafford Crown Court of assaulting a 14-year-old boy he had caught kicking a fence. Edwin Skates, 37, of Burton-on-Trent, was ordered to pay the teenager £250 compensation. The court was told that the attack left the boy with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Royal haul

The silver Communion spoon used by Queen Victoria on her deathbed was among £40,000 of royal relics stolen yesterday from a church designed by Prince Albert. A chair used by Queen Victoria was also taken in the raid on Royal St Mildred's Church at Whippingham on the Isle of Wight.

Lipman ill

The actress Maureen Lipman has pulled out of Chichester Festival Theatre's summer season after being told that she needs surgery to remove a non-cancerous tumour from her back. Ms Lipman was to have played Madame Arcati in the production of Noel Coward's classic *Blithe Spirit*.

Top drawer

Peter Brookes, *The Times* cartoonist, has won two awards for his work during the election campaign. Judges in The Macallan Best Political Cartoon Competition, who included Kenneth Baker, decided the Brookes had produced the best Conservative and best Liberal Democrat cartoon.

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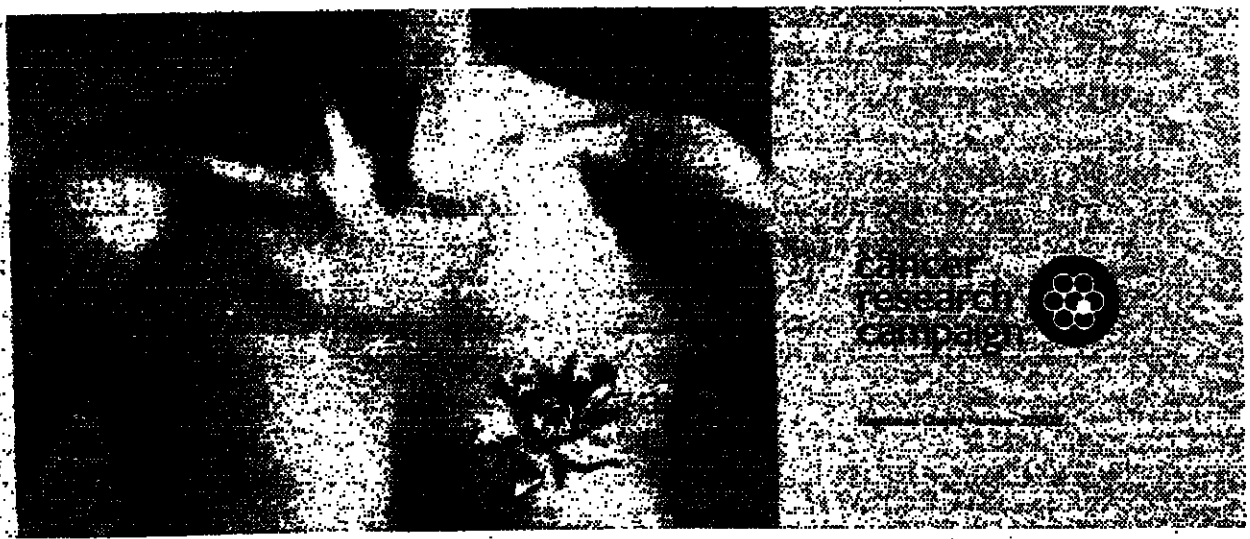
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'There is terrible grief today in our community'

Witnesses tell how father chased daughter's killer

By ADRIAN LEE

A GIRL who was found strangled after her father disturbed an intruder in their home, was part of a family trying to build a new life in Britain after escaping the political unrest in the former Yugoslavia.

Katerina Koneva, 12, who arrived in London two years ago from Macedonia, had already gained a reputation as one of the most gifted pupils at her school.

Yesterday further details emerged of how her father grappled with her killer, who had jumped from their first-floor flat in Hammersmith, not knowing that his daughter was dying inside. The intruder fled through several back streets before hijacking a car and escaping.

The attacker was still being sought last night. Police said they were unsure as to his motive for being in the flat on Thursday, but had no reason to believe he was known to the family.

Katerina left Holland Park School, in Kensington, as normal on Thursday afternoon and was alone in the family's flat in Ifley Road when she was attacked. Her father, Trajce, a business studies student, appears to have disturbed the intruder as he went up the stairs to the flat. The man locked the door from the inside and leapt from a first floor window. Mr Konev ran



A police officer in protective overalls examines the first-floor window through which the killer jumped

downstairs and grappled with the intruder for a short time before he broke free.

Ilkay Hussein, who lives nearby, said: "I saw two men struggling outside the house. Mr Konev had the other man in a bear hug. He let go for a second to close the front door and the man got away. He walked away — it seems strange now that he did not run. Mr Konev followed a short distance behind."

The two men then went along Hebron Road, Agate Road, Arnor Road and across a building site into Hammersmith Grove, where the intruder tried to commandeer Jane Hanlon's Datsun car. Mrs Hanlon, 42, a bookkeeper whose four year old son, Gem,

was in the front seat, said: "I saw two men, one on either side of my car. One had blood on the side of his face as if he had been punched. He tried to get into the car, through the open window."

"I wound it up and sped away. I was terrified for my son. One of the men was shouting 'Call the police.'"

The intruder then tried to get into a lorry in Hammersmith Grove, then turned his attentions to a black Fiat Uno, which had two women in it.

The woman driver at first managed to kick the man away, said Lee Lovell, 21, who works in a garage. "She knocked him back on to the road. She was shouting for help. Then she got out of the

car and he jumped in and drove off." The car was found abandoned a few hundred yards away.

Mr Konev returned home but found the flat door locked from the inside. A Ukrainian who lives downstairs described how the distraught father then broke into the flat and discovered his daughter.

The neighbour, who gave his name as Igor, said: "He was calling for help because he could not get the door open. He took an old table from a skip in the street and used it to try to open it."

"Me and my girlfriend were helping him and then we saw his daughter lying on the floor."

Pupils at Holland Park School were said to be heartbroken. She was a second-year pupil who led the junior choir and had never missed a day since starting there in September. She had gained 50 commendations and was described by Mary Marsh, her head teacher, as an "exceptional pupil."

Mrs Marsh said: "Katerina thrived on commitment and leadership. There is terrible grief today in our community. We heard of her death with profound sadness. This is so deeply tragic."

The victim had a six year old brother, Kristian. Her mother, Jacqueline, is studying English. Mr Konev arrived in England four years ago.



The sun shone on Earl Granville and his wife after their wedding on North Uist in the Outer Hebrides yesterday. The Queen sent her best wishes

Queen's godson marries nurse

By JOANNA BALE

THE sixth Earl Granville, a godson of the Queen, married a former trainee nurse on the family estate in the Outer Hebrides yesterday. The Earl and the new Countess, Anne Topping, have known each other for eight years after meeting at a party in London.

About 150 guests were at the private service in Kilmuir Church on North Uist, and over 300 later attended a reception at the family seat of Callernish. The Queen was unable to attend because of previous engagements but sent her good wishes.

The Countess, 28, is held in deep on the island. She said: "When I met Fergus I did not know he had a title. I only found out later. I come from a fairly ordinary, middle-class background, but his title did not mean that much to me. I am just happy to be Fergus's wife."

She was given away by her father, Bernard, a retired headmaster and the service was conducted by the local Church of Scotland Minister, the Rev David MacInnes.

Pleased at the sunny weather, Earl Granville, 37, said: "I was very nervous before the service, but I am a very happy man. I have a marvelous and lovely wife."

The Countess helps as a volunteer carer with a local Alzheimers Group, cooking and serving lunch at a day centre

Judges will rule today on wife's right to abortion

By SHIRLEY ENGLISH

A PREGNANT woman will learn today whether she can have an abortion after an day of protracted legal argument over whether her husband has any rights to intervene to save his unborn baby's life.

James Kelly, 28, from Inverkeithing, Fife, went to the Appeal Court in Edinburgh yesterday in a final attempt to maintain the temporary ban preventing his estranged wife Lynne, 21, a cabaret singer, from terminating her three-month pregnancy. Earlier in the week he was told he had no rights as a father over the unborn child.

As Mrs Kelly's father, John Falconer, listened from the public benches at the court yesterday, the fetus growing inside his daughter was made the subject of four and a half hours of legal wrangling before three judges.

Anne Smith, QC, for Mrs Kelly, argued that the fetus had no separate legal identity from its mother and the father had no right in law to interfere. Colin Sutherland, QC,

for Mr Kelly, claimed that a father, as one of the unborn child's guardians, could act to protect it.

Mrs Smith said that although the mother had not had a scan, she was believed to be 12 to 14 weeks pregnant and it was just a matter of "days" before she will not be able to have an abortion without having labour induced.

The judges, headed by Lord Cullen, were told that Mrs Kelly had been driven from the family home and forced to live in a women's refuge during her marriage. In May 1996 Mr Kelly was convicted of assaulting his wife.

Mr Sutherland said that the fetus had established rights "in itself" under civil law from the moment of conception and the father as its guardian could uphold those rights in anticipation of its birth.

He questioned the consistency of the law which allowed a father to protect his unborn child from injury in civil matters, for example in a case of medical negligence, but

appeared to give him no rights when those injuries would be fatal. The Abortion Act 1967 had decriminalised abortion in certain circumstances, but did not make it lawful under civil law, he said.

"If abortion is a civil wrong, which in my submission it is because it will damage the fetus, then it must be capable of being interdicted, and the obvious people who would have title and interest to sue, must be a child's potential guardians," he said.

But Mrs Smith argued that the fetus's rights as a human being became active only at birth. She said: "A fetus is an intrinsic part of the body of a pregnant woman. It is as much a part of her body as the placenta or umbilical cord. She is not merely a convenient container."

She said the basis on which Mr Kelly had obtained the original interim interdict (emergency ban) on Thursday was "seriously open to question". He had claimed his wife had given false information to doctors about his violence towards her, yet a year earlier he had been convicted of assaulting her.

The battle over the abortion began on Thursday when Mr Kelly, a roofer, was granted an emergency ban stopping his wife terminating the pregnancy at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. The operation was due to take place the following day. He is the first father in Britain to be granted legal means to delay a termination.

The couple had separated two weeks before he was granted the ban after a short and stormy marriage in which each accused the other of violence and neglecting their 18-month-old daughter, Hazel.



James and Lynne Kelly on their wedding day. The pair separated shortly before Mr Kelly won an interim ban

Conman in drag fooled cashiers — but only once

By PETER FOSTER

A MAN who dressed up as a woman fooled bank cashiers into handing over ransom money after claiming his daughter had been kidnapped.

Michael Barton, 29, borrowed his girlfriend's handbag and put on a hat, gloves and scarf bought from a second-hand shop before entering the bank and pushing a ransom note over the counter. The demand claimed a child had been kidnapped and was bound and gagged in a car boot. The letter said the kidnappers were listening in on bugging devices and they would kill the child if a substantial sum was not handed over.

The confidence trick worked when Barton, an aromatherapist, went into a branch of Barclays Bank in Coventry on February 17. Neil

Moore, for the prosecution, said Barton went to the till and slid an envelope under the security glass before whispering: "They have got my child."

The letter began: "The life and safety of an eight-year-old girl kidnapped from her home this morning depends on you fulfilling the demand herein."

The letter said the safe return of the child depended on the cashiers handing over several thousand pounds in a plastic bag inside an envelope. Mr Moore said the cashiers were warned that if they called security or police, the girl would suffer and a detailed map of where the child's body could be found would be sent to national newspapers.

The cashiers were so struck by what they read that they decided the proper course of action was to put money in the bag and they placed £1,600 in

it and slid it under the counter," Mr Moore said.

Ten days later Barton tried the scam again at a branch of Midland Bank in Oxford but the cashier recognised her blackmailer as a man. Bank officials coaxed Barton into a backroom where he insisted his name was Alice Hargreaves before producing an electronic pager, claiming it was the bugging device. Shortly afterwards police were called and Barton confessed.

Howard Wilson, for the defence, told Oxford Crown Court that Barton had been driven to desperate measures after two failed business ventures left him in debt.

Judge Charles Harris, QC, sentenced Barton, from Coventry, to 21 months in jail on each offence to run consecutively. Barton had a previous conviction for blackmail.



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Sad farewell to an industry well past its peak

By RUSSELL JENKINS

THIS last big manufacturer of quality felt hats bowed to the dictates of fashion yesterday after more than 200 years of supplying homburgs, trilbies and topers to gentlemen of distinction.

Christy of Stockport, fighting a losing battle against the baseball cap and bare-headedness, is closing its factory in the town with the loss of 111 jobs.

Sir Winston Churchill favoured a Christy homburg during the dark days of the Second World War. President Mikhail Gorbachev loved his trilby and the males of every generation of British royalty since the company's establishment in 1773 hung a Christy on the palace peg. The company also made bowlers for Whitehall civil servants, tweed caps for the county set and dressage hats for generations of horse-loving girls.

But Christy has been gradually succumbing to the inevitable. Stockport, whose football team is called "The Hatters", became famous for the manufacture of men's fur felt hats and in the last century there were more than 30 factories turning out quality hats to be sold around the world. The company, founded by the Quaker duo Miller Christy and Joseph Stores, was among the biggest and best. This century, however, men have slowly but surely thrown off their hats and caps.

Mark Billing, chief executive, said yesterday: "It is a very sad day. We have been here since the 1820s. What happened was that during the 1950s and 60s hat wearing declined and most of the other Stockport businesses closed down. We acquired companies over the years until we were the



Top of the range: Harold Wood, a hatmaker at the Christy factory in Stockport that has made quality headwear favoured by generations of royalty

last surviving maker of men's felt hats in the United Kingdom. It's a real shame.

"The reason why we have had to do this now is simply because sales have been declining over the

past eight to nine months to such an extent that they are so low we cannot sustain the overheads associated with this large site. It is the end of an era. Everyone was expecting it. The people of Stock-

port are not daft. They realise formal hat wearing among men is declining rapidly. All the growth is in the youth market with baseball caps, knitted and Kangol caps. We tried it but people

associate Christy with traditional hats." Maxine Nixon, of the GMB trade union, said: "We have known they have been having difficulties but unless we can force

people to wear hats there is nothing we can do." Over the years Christy had assimilated many of the town's failing businesses and, in recent years, has struggled on as Brit-

ain's last surviving felt hat maker. Even now, more than half the top hats in Ascot's Royal Enclosure are probably Christy's. The company's straw boaters and panamas can still be seen shielding the over-lunched faces of MCC members at Lord's from the sun and covering the bald patches of Wimbledon tennis umpires. Teenage girls covet the Christy Beaufort, the classic velvet-covered equestrian safety helmet and the company sponsors the Olympic three-day eventer Tina Gifford.

A craze for topers after the success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* proved only a blip on profits and loss figures and the more-sustained fashion for designer-label baseball caps manufactured cheaply in the Far East has confirmed the demise of the flat cap.

Christy briefly flirted with the kind of cap seen turned around on stars such as the footballer Eric Cantona and the tennis player Andre Agassi, and the Kangol, as modelled by the pop singer Liam Gallagher, but, as one senior executive lamented: "Who wants to wear a Christy baseball cap?"

The announcement of the factory's closure comes three months after the award of a £1,328,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to establish the first national Museum of Hatting in the Grade II listed Wellington Mill. Now much of the machinery and artefacts in Christy's factory will find a new home in the museum when the factory finally closes towards the end of the year.

Some of the company's operations will be transferred to small factories in Bury, Greater Manchester, and Witney, Oxfordshire.

'Killing field' farmer is fined for poisoning birds

AN ELDERLY pig farmer, whose land was like a "killing field", littered with animal corpses, poisoned bait and ancient traps, was fined £15,500 yesterday for killing rare birds of prey.

John Edwards, 87, was "dedicated to killing creatures," magistrates at Thame, Oxfordshire, were told. He had poisoned three red kites, a protected species, because he believed an old wives' tale about them, attacking farm animals.

David Robinson, for the prosecution, said that Mr Edwards was using pole traps, outlawed in 1904, and gin traps, banned 30 years ago, to kill rabbits, foxes, crows and pheasants. He would then lace the corpses with poison to attract the rare red kites to his farm at Wallingford, Oxfordshire.

Police raided the farm in April last year after neighbours found the bodies of three red kites. They discovered banned chemicals, poi-

soned carcasses being used as bait, 50 gin traps, nine pole traps and dozens of syringes, some filled with poison.

Mr Robinson claimed Edwards believed the birds hunted for prey on his farm despite evidence that kites only ate carrion. He said: "Over the decades much has changed in the ways of the countryside. While public opinion and the law has moved on Mr Edwards has remained rooted in a past that has long since seen these practices go."

The building in which the officers found these cruel items was dedicated to the killing of creatures that Mr Edwards simply did not like. "The court was told that red kites were common across Britain 200 years ago but were almost wiped out at the end of the 19th century by farmers. A project was launched in 1989 to re-introduce the species to England and successful breeding began three years later."

During the trial Edwards admitted he did not like the

birds but insisted he had never harmed them. He said: "I think the conservationists have been silly to bring them back into this country. It should be the people who release them who also come to feed them. Why should my farm provide for them?"

The sentence, believed to be a record for such an offence, with £500 costs, was imposed after Edwards had been convicted of one specimen charge under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act of killing a red kite and of possessing traps and syringes for an unlawful purpose. He denied the charges but admitted possessing two banned poisons and storing syringes containing a dangerous chemical.

After the verdict, Guy Shorrocks, investigating officer for the RSPB, said: "I am surprised by the size of the fine but it sends a clear message that society will not tolerate this kind of crime." He said poisoning of rare birds was still a big problem.

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'Pavlos asked to have an affair. I did not feel good about it ... I had been in a very long marriage'

Woman asked to 'rate' lover who gave her HIV

FROM DANIEL MCGORRY
IN LARNACA

A BRITISH woman who claims she was infected with HIV by a Cypriot fisherman struggled yesterday as she denied allegations that she had moved to Cyprus to pursue her sex life.

Shifting uncomfortably in the witness box, Janette Pink, 45, looked startled when asked how she rated as a lover the man who had infected her. Was he "good, very good, average or excellent?" she was asked.

"Good," she snapped and for the first time in the two days of testimony she glowered at Pavlos Georgiou, who was smiling at her evident embarrassment. Repeatedly he leant from the dock to offer his defence counsel details about Mrs Pink's alleged sexual proclivities.

She told the court in Larnaca that her sterile marriage had ended after her husband, a chartered accountant, had had a nervous breakdown and blamed his health on three years of sexual abstinence. "I was not very active sexually and it did not have much importance for me."

Tassos Economou, for the defence, said: "Pavlos describes you as a woman who likes sex very much. Is this true?" Mrs Pink closed her eyes and said: "True."

"He says you are a woman who prefers sex to food, is this true as well?" Mr Economou asked. "No," shouted Mrs Pink, shaking her head, while ten yards away her former lover rocked with laughter in the witness box, his striped shirt unbuttoned to his navel.



Pavlos Georgiou, left, with his twin brother, Petros, at whose bar he was first introduced to Mrs Pink

The defence ignored her denials that she had a three-year affair with a Cypriot property dealer referred to only as Damianos, and that he left her because he was frightened by the powerfully built Mr Georgiou. "I had no affairs," she replied.

Mrs Pink said the affair with Mr Georgiou had begun in January 1994 against her better judgment. "Pavlos asked to have an affair. I did not feel good about it because he was married. I did not feel right about being the mistress but as I saw him a few more times my feelings for him grew. I am not in the habit of having casual relationships. I had been in a very long marriage. I loved Pavlos."

She insisted that she had not plotted to seduce Mr Georgiou, who borrowed money from her and later asked her to look after his four

children. She said he had been her only sexual partner in the past seven years.

She denied refusing to let her lover use a contraceptive and described a night when friends and family had left some condoms on her pillow as a "practical joke."

Vic and Sheila Ruston, Mrs Pink's parents, sitting in the front row of the court, showed their irritation as defence questions portrayed their daughter as a woman of loose morals who enjoyed making an exhibition of herself singing in pubs with her friends.

Mrs Pink, from Basildon, Essex, managed a weak smile as she denied that, saying: "Not me. I have a terrible singing voice."

Mr Economou said that in September 1993 Mrs Pink was introduced to Mr Georgiou at his twin brother Petros's bar in Ayia Napa by a British

arms dealer called Bruce, who was later blacklisted from the island. She said she was ignorant of her acquaintance's illegal arms dealing.

Mrs Pink agreed that at their first meeting she had given Mr Georgiou her telephone number but said it was six months before they had sex. In a near-whisper she said they first had intercourse at Mr Georgiou's house while his wife, Martha, was receiving treatment in London for Aids, which killed her in 1994.

The test case has been brought under a law used on the island to prevent the spread of cholera, typhoid and venereal disease. The prosecution alleges that Mr Georgiou knowingly infected Mrs Pink and other women after being warned of the risks by his doctors about the dangers of unprotected sex.

Mrs Pink said she had been ignorant about HIV even though she had worked for as a secretary at a health authority. "I thought it was related to homosexuality or drug users."

As the second day of the trial stretched way beyond what court officials had expected, Judge Antonis Liasos interrupted proceedings and asked why the defence was asking so much about Mrs Pink's sex life. "To test her veracity," Mr Economou replied.

After more than four hours of cross-examination Mrs Pink looked tired and frail but the judge said she would have to appear again today to continue her evidence as the first witness against Mr Georgiou. He has denied "negligently" infecting her with HIV. If convicted he faces up to two years in prison and a £1,800 fine.



Janette Pink leaving Larnaca court yesterday with her mother, Sylvia Ruston, and her cousin Sharon Keefe, left

'It's her fault too, why should I apologise?'

By DANIEL MCGORRY

AS JANETTE PINK endured the indignity of having her personal life stripped bare in a Cypriot courtroom yesterday, the man who is accused of infecting her with HIV treated her with callous disregard. Pavlos Georgiou turned his back on Mrs Pink as she was led into the courtroom at Larnaca, and said: "She does not exist any more for me."

With a shrug of his shoulders he said: "Why should I bother to look at her or talk to her? I had my head down, and did not look at her because she is no longer here. She is out of my mind. I thought nothing when I saw her."

Never once has he shown

regret for giving her the virus, despite attempts by his brother and other relatives to force him to apologise. Invited to do so again yesterday, he smiled and said: "Why should I? It is her fault too."

It is ten months since Mrs Pink, a divorced mother of two, left Mr Georgiou and returned to England to die. Her recent physical improvement because of a daily regime of drugs she describes as a "temporary reprieve. I know I do not have long. I do not even know if I will see the end of this trial."

Mr Georgiou's clumsy attempts to avoid their courtroom confrontation when he

checked himself into an Aids clinic two hours before the trial was due to start on Thursday were forgotten yesterday. He skipped up the courtroom steps, embraced well-wishers and gripped his twin brother, Petros, in a bear hug.

The 40-year-old fisherman took delight in giving a series of local television interviews on the steps of the court, boasting how he would escape conviction in his test case brought by the island's Attorney-General.

As he swaggered towards the dock, he mocked the television documentary made about Mrs Pink's plight. "I know I will win this case and then I will tell my story, the true story. When I talk I will shake the whole of Cyprus."

His doleful expression of the first day was replaced by a smirk as he watched the evident discomfiture of his lover of three years as she was questioned by his defence attorney about her sex life.

Sitting close by was his twin, who at one stage made a gesture of reconciliation to Mrs Pink. As the day's proceedings were halted so that she could take her medication, Petros Georgiou held out his hand, which she reluctantly shook before hurrying away as he began to speak to her.

Mrs Pink said: "He came up to me but I told him I did not want to say anything. I have got nothing to say to him or to his family."

As she was led away by her family, Petros Georgiou slapped her father, Victor Ruston, on the back. "This was not an apology because I have nothing to say sorry to her for, but she was once my friend when she lived with my brother," he said.

"We are two different people. Maybe we have the same body, the same face, but I have done nothing wrong. Don't forget she has made a big mistake, too. It's her fault, too, that she has Aids."

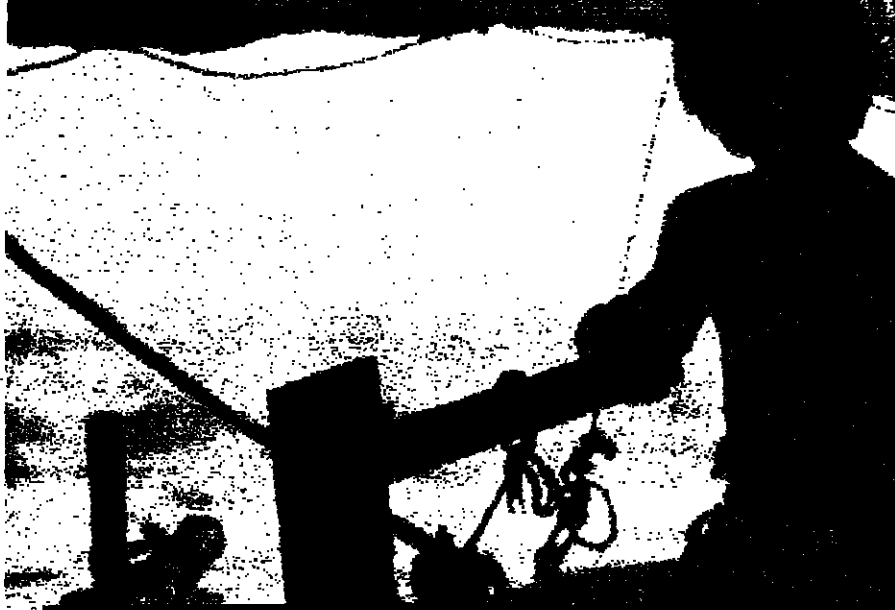
He complained in television interviews that his bar in the resort of Ayia Napa was floundering because customers were boycotting it, mistaking him for his brother.

"My brother is suffering. I am suffering. It is not just Janette. She should remember that."

Camelot

Camelot, the lottery operator, points out that it has a policy of full disclosure and transparency in respect of its accounts (leading article, May 13) and that it does not keep the interest on unclaimed prizes.

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After more than a year's research, Tesco says it has come up with "the very best in trolley technology" and is investing £4 million on a complete refurbishment of its 210,000-strong fleet. They will all now be fitted with a small clip over the wheels, put to the test yester-

Back wheel box holds the key to cornering

day amid much excitement by Clarkson, who obviously delighted in carering past bemused shoppers in front of the media.

David Hughes, Tesco's chief trolley buyer, explained that the new £60 model was the product of careful market research. "After a lot of complaints by customers about erratic trolley control, we consulted the suppliers about a better design, they came up with this new steering system," he said, pointing at

A quick aisle test at a Tesco supermarket in west London suggested that the boasts about its cornering were well-founded, although sticky wheels made the trolley a little slow off the mark.

Ruth Knight was certainly impressed as she shopped with the new model in the store. "I don't like the Sainsbury's ones, which are so frustrating I feel like hitting them. This is much better," she said. As the machine ground to a halt, a sharp kick to the stubborn back wheel got things moving again.

Susan Parker, also shopping in the store, took it in her stride. "It seems to move OK, although there is a strange



Aisle trial: after its unveiling at a store in west London yesterday, Jeremy Clarkson pushes the new trolley to the limit past the cornflakes

clicking sound coming from the wheels," she said.

Mr Hughes was less than complimentary about his rivals' trolleys. "Safeway have a very different system which they have tried on some of their models. I have heard that it is very unfriendly.

"Sainsbury's have the same

device as us on some of their trolleys, but we are the only ones who are fitting out the whole fleet."

Today's classic style of trolley was introduced in the 1960s by Sainsbury's, although they first appeared in British stores in the 1950s, when they were called prams

The average store now carries 700 or so trolleys, rising to 1,000 in the superstores. In 1994, Safeway introduced its "easy steer" trolley with an extra bar where the handle is

Alison Macfadden, from Safeway, said that they were not introducing the easy-steer across the board. "It is one of ten designs we have. We like to give our customers choice."

Sainsbury's said: "We are testing trolleys with special steering devices in a couple of stores, but we are not introducing them in every store yet. We have cracked the steering problem by good general maintenance."

Leading article, page 23

By A STAFF REPORTER

A COACH driver was yesterday charged with dangerous driving and causing the death of passengers in a crash. Phillip Crisp, 26, was found not guilty of all ten charges at a jury at Cardiff Crown Court. Mr Crisp, of Aberdare, Rhondda Cynon Taff, had given evidence that the brakes failed while nearing a roundabout on the A40 in July 1995. The vehicle skidded and overturned, killing eight women and two men. More than 40 were on the trip to Stranford-on-Avon, including Mr Crisp's pregnant wife and son, who both survived. The prosecution alleged that Mr Crisp approached the roundabout too fast and failed to apply the brakes in time. Vehicle examiners found that the rear brakes were not working and the front brakes were in good order. The coach owner was fined £750 for operating a defective vehicle.

Joan Broadstock, 37, whose husband Derek, 44, died in the crash, said afterwards that changes in the law were needed to speed up investigations and action in such cases. "Nearly two years has been far too long to wait to find out what happened on the coach."

BY RUSSELL KEMPSON

SIR STANLEY MATTHEWS, the former England footballer, was admitted to hospital yesterday suffering from chest pains. Sir Stanley, 82, of Stoke-on-Trent, was treated in North Staffordshire Hospital's new £1 million cardiology department, which he officially opened two weeks ago.

Sir Stanley had been troubled by flu and bronchitis for several weeks. "He woke up this morning with pains in his chest, which were worse than usual," his wife, Mila, said. Dr. John Davis, a consultant, said: "He is being observed and undergoing tests. His condition is comfortable."

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Wilde's lost answers show the importance of being successful

BY DALIA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

EARLY witticisms from the pen of Oscar Wilde have emerged on a previously unknown questionnaire which he filled out for a task as a 21-year-old Oxford undergraduate.

His answers, written long before anyone other than students had heard of him, convey the vanity and verve with which his name was to become synonymous.

To question 24, "What is your favourite occupation?", he wrote: "Reading my own sonnets."

To question 27, asking for the character traits he most detested in men and women, he responded: "Vanity, self-esteem, conceit."

And on his own "distinguishing characteristics", Wilde noted: "Inordinate self-esteem."

The 1877 answers display in miniature the flamboyance and wit of the writer who later told a customs officer that the only thing he had to declare

was his genius. His handwritten entries span two pages in an "Album for Confessions or Dates, Habits and Convictions", which is being offered for sale at Christie's in South Kensington on June 6 by a descendant of a theatrical impresario and actor, Adderley Millar Howard. He may have been the compiler.

Rupert Neelds, book specialist at Christie's South Kensington, said that the existence of the questionnaire had been "totally unknown". It has been in the same family for three generations.

Nobody is sure now why Howard might have compiled it or even how he knew Wilde. "They were close in age," said Mr Neelds. "Wilde wasn't well known and had only written sonnets."

"It's a funny coincidence that he should ask Wilde to fill in a questionnaire along with a whole load of other people who remained obscure. It prefigures everything that was

to happen to him although he was so young at the time." Among the most revealing entries was his answer to "What is your aim in life?". Wilde, whose life was to be ruined by his homosexual affair with Lord Alfred Douglas, wrote: "Success, fame or even notoriety."

He achieved all three. The questionnaire, which covers a wide range of topics, is punctuated with Wilde's characteristic self-mockery: he jokes fun at the very qualities or faults that he admits to having himself.

His idea of happiness is "absolute power over men's minds, even if accompanied by toothache", while his idea of misery is "living a poor and respectable life in an obscure village".

In response to the question of his favourite "book to take up for an hour", he replies tartly: "I never take up books for an hour."

Question 28 — "If not your-

self, who would you rather be?" — elicits the interesting response: "A cardinal of the Catholic Church". Wilde's *bête noir* is "a thorough Irish Protestant" and his dream simply "getting my hair cut".

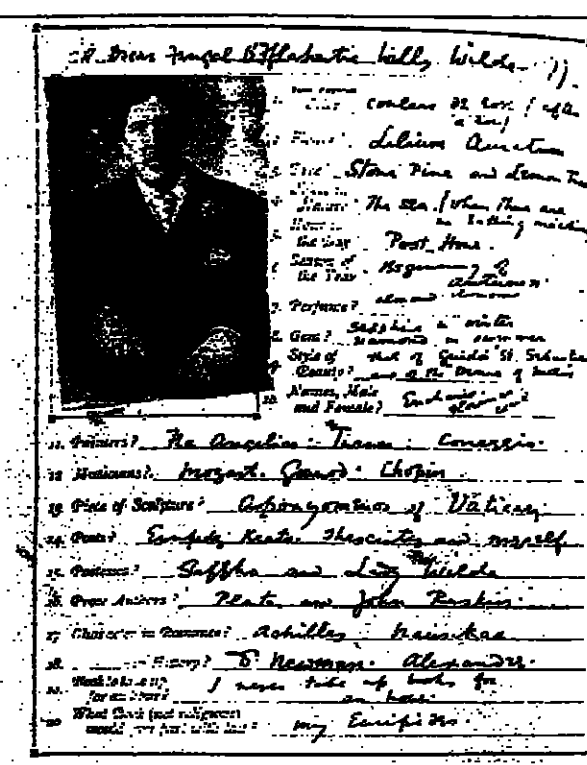
Asked for his idea of "the sweetest words in the world", he writes simply: "Well Done!" Curiously, the only question which Wilde chose

not to answer was: "What is your motto?". Wilde's other answers include: Favourite colour? Couleur de rose (after a row). Object in Nature? The Sea (when there are no bathing machines). Gem? Sapphire in winter, diamond in summer. Painters? Fra Angelico,

Turner, Correggio. Poets? Euripides. Keats. Theocritus. Poetesses? Sappho and Lady Wilde. Prose authors? Plato and John Ruskin. What book (not religious) would you part with last? My Euripides. What epoch would you choose to have lived in? The Italian

Renaissance. What trait of character do you admire most in men? The power of attracting friends. What is your favourite game? Snipe and lawn tennis. What are the saddest words? Failure.

Arts, page 21
Wilde's sculptor:
Magazine, page 10



Wilde's handwritten replies to the survey: his distinguishing characteristic, he says, is "inordinate self-esteem"

THE SUNDAY TIMES



IN FROM THE COLD

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THE SUNDAY TIMES
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Indians bring Bollywood to Highlands

BY DALIA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

AFTER Hollywood, Bollywood is coming to the Scottish Highlands. An Indian blockbuster movie, described as an action-packed romantic drama, starts filming there this weekend.

Arzo, translated as desire, stars leading Indian actors, has a script in Hindi and will cost £2 million to make. It will be screened throughout Asia to an audience of 900 million people.

A spokesman for the Highlands Film Commission said that so many Indian films had been featured in films made by Bollywood — the name for the Indian film industry — that it was looking for alternative locations. The dramatic scenery in the Highlands had captured its imagination.

With many more Indian directors and producers expressing interest in filming in Scotland, the commission expects two or three Indian movies a year to be made there for the next few years. Arzo has been made possible by Tony Hussain, a Dundee restaurateur and part-time film impresario. "This is a dream come true for me and is a tremendous boost for Scotland and will bring much-needed money into deprived areas of the country," he said.

He plans another four Indian films to be shot in Scotland, and the British Film Commission is liaising with numerous other leading Indian production companies. The shoot was almost delayed by a prob-

lem with visas for 16 members of Dayavanti Pictures until Alex Salmond, the Scottish National Party leader, stepped in to help, raising the issue in the House of Commons. He said the film would boost the local economy.

Filming, under the Indian director Lawrence D'Souza, is likely to last for more than a month in various locations in Dundee and the Highlands. An 80-strong production crew will arrive in Scotland, complete with a team of chefs to cater for the actors.

Mr Hussain, who is also acting in the film, hopes that the film premiere will be held on the same day in November in both Bombay and Edinburgh. "When Asian people see the stars who are coming to Scotland, they will go mad. We have got Madhuri Dixit and Ashay Kumar jetting in, as well as Amruth Puri, who was in the *Indiana Jones* films, playing the villain," he said.

Graham Ireland of the Highland commission, who has helped to bring Dayavanti to Scotland, said: "Although Scotland has proved to be a top Hollywood location in recent years, with *Rob Roy*, *Braveheart* and *Loch Ness*, this decision can only boost Scotland's profile worldwide."

A spokeswoman for the British Film Commission said: "We have handled at least six big Indian inquiries. Some are still in development."

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THE COMPUTER SUPERSTORE



BY RUSSELL JENKINS

Two authorities, Tower Hamlets, in east London, and North Tyneside, continued sending children to Saint and his wife Carol despite knowing of the spent conviction. Clwyd County Council, now defunct, had also allowed him to continue as a member of its fostering and adoption panel.

For 12 years, from 1973, he

Tower Hamlets interviewed Saint in 1990 about his previous conviction. He told them

Bob Lewis, president of the Association of Directors of Social Services, said: "I don't think we should be waiting for the law to change. I think it is incumbent on myself and other directors of social services to make sure that our practice already reflects that policy."



BY MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

Mr Cook will remind the Japanese Foreign Minister of the depth of feeling on the part of the veterans. As a further sign that he is anxious to see developments on this issue, Derek Fatchett, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, has invited members of the veterans' association to see him on June 3.

BY JAMES LANDALE
POLITICAL REPORTER

The Wine and Spirit Association said it was keen to assist in action against "unscrupulous manufacturers" who ignored the industry's code of conduct. Alcohol Concern, which campaigns against alcohol abuse, also welcomed the move by ministers.

BY CAROL MIDGLEY
MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

The appointments came after Michael Jackson, the former Director of Television and BBCi Controller, left to become chief executive of Channel 4. Mr Yentob's job embraces far more responsibilities than Mr Jackson's.

Mr Yentob and Mr Wyatt are preparing to appoint a BBCi Controller. A source said: "We are expecting an internal appointment and a youngish candidate."

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New MPs put politeness on political agenda

BY JAMES LANDALE
POLITICAL REPORTER

THE House of Commons is reeling. Ten days into the new Parliament, the 243 fresh MPs — 57 of them women — are making their presence felt: politeness reigns as the politics of the hearth is treated with disdain.

The difference can be seen both in the Chamber and outside. MPs say the new women members have had a civilising influence on the more confrontational style of some of their older, male colleagues. At the same time, the police, attendants and staff who make Westminster run have expressed their delight at being treated with courtesy.

A policeman who has worked in the Commons for many years said: "It's just nice to be treated like a human being."

In the Chamber, MPs have noticed a more consensual approach, especially in the first new-style Prime Minister's Question Time on Wednesday. Judith Church, who became Labour MP for Dagenham in 1994, said: "The change in style could be put down to the new women as much as any change in format."

"Prime Minister's Questions was much more fluid," she said. "It was more like a modern dialogue and not a bear garden and I am sure the women had an impact on it."

Some of the new women were shocked by the heckling of Tory MPs. "They came out asking who they were and whether they always behaved like that," Ms Church said.

"They were quite shocked by the childish behaviour." The heckling will become "increasingly unfashionable," she believes, simply because the women on the Labour benches will not respond in kind.

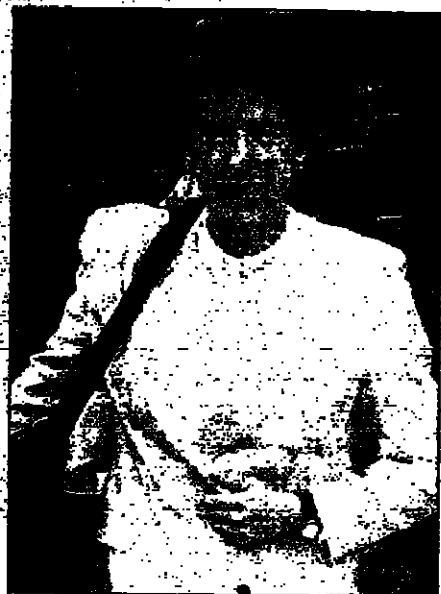
Lorna Fitzsimons (Lab, Rochdale) said: "We have definitely changed the tone and the whole feel of the House. There is a realisation that it should be a modern working environment. That could mean both a creche but also changes to some of the arcane procedures."

Julia Drown (Lab, Swindon South) said: "I was expecting quite a lot of 'yah boo' behaviour but not so much. Already that is changing and it does feel exciting to be part of this change. It's not possible for things to keep going as they have in what was a very male-dominated place."

Miss Drown, a former NHS finance director, said that women brought common sense to the Chamber. "We don't go in for all that sub-thumping at the dispatch box. Old habits die hard, though, among the men. One male Labour MP grumbled: 'It's a bit like a cocktail party in the division lobbies. It's been all very euphoric with a lot of women in bright, colourful clothes.'"

The new women are also making a practical difference. Plans are being drawn up for new lavatories in the division lobbies, which now have facilities only for men. Several new lavatories are expected to be built during the summer recess. Pressure is also growing for a creche.

With the present Commons



CAROLINE SPELMAN (C, Meriden) is one of four new women on her party's back benches. She began her search for a secretary before the election, interviewing several who worked for retiring Tory MPs. With experienced staff, she acquired an office, desk and telephone more quickly than most MPs. "What I didn't want was three weeks when I was offering below-standard service to my constituents." The 39-year-old former businesswoman and mother-of-three has already helped one constituent with a complaint about police treatment. "We were able to intervene quickly and sort it out." Although Mrs Spelman rented a flat near the Commons in expectation of the late nights, she was surprised by the voting procedure. "I hadn't appreciated that a 10pm vote might be in three parts and would not end until 11.30pm." She has found it helps to work closely with the other new Tory women. "We are all starting from the same position."



LEMBEDT ÖPIK (Lib Dem, Montgomeryshire) has had more trouble than most new MPs in making himself at home in the House of Commons. The officials cannot get his name right. The 32-year-old former personnel officer, whose parents are Estonian, has had three versions of his security pass: Öpik Lembedt, Öpik Lembedt and, finally, Lembedt Öpik. He is now fighting to get the umlaut on the O. He does, however, have an office and a desk, but he has to share his telephone with another MP and six staff. The Commons has, however, "lived up and down" to his expectations. "The sense of vitality is here. There are a lot of very driven people. But all of a sudden, there are 659 people in one place who are used to being chiefs in their own patches and they are having to learn to be Indians. The most exciting thing is that there are a huge proportion of people who feel that there is a real chance for change. Sometimes I am sitting in the Chamber and I think I am watching history."



DONNA KING (Lab, Bethnal Green and Bow) is horrified by some of the arcane procedures and believes that new MPs deserve more information and guidance. "Nobody tells you anything. You sink or swim. I am paddling at the moment... The things that strike me as most absurd are the procedural points to do with voting. There were many of us in the lobbies aghast as we stood there and walked through. We had to do it three times last night, each vote taking 25 minutes. One MP calculated that he had spent 94 hours standing in the lobby during the last Parliament." Ms King, 29, a former trade union official, would like the Commons to consider electronic voting. She is irritated by the practice of MPs shouting "hear, hear", rather than clapping, which is not allowed. Although she has an office, all is not well: "I have my feet under the table but no phone on the desk. I think it is amazing that they give MPs all these perks but no phone."



CHRISTOPHER LESLIE (Lab, Shipley) is the baby of the House at 24. He wasted no time in seeking the advice of the Father of the House, Sir Edward Heath. "He told me to pace myself because I am going to be here for a long time. Things have been so rushed I think I have ignored his advice already... It has been quite a whirlwind. I took the plunge and delivered my maiden speech last Thursday. It was okay. The chamber seems smaller than it looks on television. It's quite cosy and it has good acoustics. I have been more nervous speaking elsewhere. But having done it, I feel a bit blooded and feel a bit more confident." Mr Leslie already has an office, a desk and a telephone, but he is struggling to keep up with his flood of mail. He has found a secretary who will join him in a few weeks. He includes among his other worries his hotel bills and avoiding the constant temptation of the Commons bars. "My constituents have to come before my beer intake."



RUTH KELLY (Lab, Bolton West) has an extra difficulty in getting used to Labour's crowded back benches: she is heavily pregnant. "It is not very comfortable, especially if you have backache." But the 29-year-old former Bank of England economist has had the benefit of a sisterly welcome from the Tory former Prisons Minister Ann Widdecombe. "She showed me around the House and the tea rooms. She was extremely pleasant... It's wonderful to be part of such a large new intake. There is a tremendous sense of solidarity." Although pleasantly surprised by the cosy, friendly atmosphere — two Tory MPs wrote to congratulate her on her maiden speech — she has been dismayed by the shortage of office space and having to endure the cramped and sweaty division lobbies. "The one thing I find most noticeable is the antiquated voting system. I did not realise that a 10pm vote means it could be 11pm before you leave."

barber expected to accept early retirement this summer, work will also begin on a unisex hairdressing salon, which is likely to be open by the autumn. The Lady Members' Room is very cramped and the new women MPs want another room as well. Demand is also growing for a proper shop in the Commons. The gift shop sells chocolates, wine and souvenirs but nothing practical such as tights or hair spray.

For most of the new MPs, the first few weeks have been a logistical nightmare. Many are still having difficulty obtaining offices and telephones. Although Commons staff say that only a handful remain roomless, many others have yet to have their telephones connected. Some new MPs are unhappy with the lack of computers. One Commons official said: "Many have been working in business and take these sorts of things for granted."

The arcane procedure of filing through the division lobbies to vote, which can take hours, has also been criticised. Several new MPs believe that the Commons should consider electronic voting, which is used by many continental parliaments.

However, in an article in the latest edition of *The House Magazine*, a columnist known only as Backbencher warns MPs against being "seduced" into seeking such changes to Commons tradition. The writer defends the cumbersome division lobby system as offering MPs their only chance to "rub shoulders" with most of their colleagues.

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14 HOME NEWS

Blair draws blank in search for Church MP

By Andrew Pierce, Political Correspondent

TONY BLAIR, whose ministerial team contains many active Christians, has been rebuffed in his efforts to appoint an MP to represent the interests of the Church of England in Parliament.

Several weeks after the last ministerial reshuffle was allocated, there is still no decision on who will become the Second Church Estates Commissioner. The delay is an embarrassment to Mr Blair, whose election victory has coincided with a spiritual revival in the Labour Party.

Eight members of the Cabinet belong to the Christian Socialist Movement. Up to half of the ministerial team are regular church-goers and are happy to talk about the role God plays in their politics.

Last week Mr Blair offered the unpaid post, which requires answering questions in the Commons once a month, to Stuart Bell, the MP for Middlesbrough. Mr Bell, who was overlooked for a ministerial job, rejected the post.

The role of the Commissioner, who represents the 95 church commissioners who manage the Church's £2.7 billion assets, has become increasingly important. The power to spend income earned from the assets is to be transferred from the commissioners to a central council chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury and York. It is

part of the most radical reforms to church government for 150 years. Many bishops privately oppose the reforms because they fear it could weaken the links between the Church and the State.

Frank Field, the Labour MP for Birkenhead who is a past member of the Church's House of Laity, was the favourite to take over the increasingly high-profile post but instead he took the post of Minister of State at the Department of Social Security.

The odds have shortened on Peter Pike, the MP for Burnley, who is a devout Anglican, being offered the job. But Mr Pike, dubbed 'Worzel Gummidge' by colleagues after an attempt was made to have his appearance debated in Burnley council chamber, is not regarded as a great advertisement for new Labour.

Ann Widdecombe, the Tory MP who converted to Roman Catholicism over the ordination of women, attacked the delay.

She said: "Given the parade Tony Blair makes of Christianity, I am surprised that the spokesman for the Church Commissioners was not his first appointment instead of his last."

One senior Church figure said last night: "We need a strong man in that job. In the next five years the archbishops will be trying hard to weaken the influence of the Commissioners. The Second Church Estates Commissioner has to resist that pressure. But the trouble is all the strong candidates have been given ministerial jobs."

A senior Labour source said: "Stuart Bell was the ideal candidate. He is tough, he is his own man and he can read a balance sheet. If he has turned it down I cannot think of anyone else to do it."

The new Labour Christians include Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, who is the son of a Presbyterian preacher, Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, and Jack Straw, the Home Secretary.



Field: accepted social security post

Carey opens museum at Augustine's abbey

By John Young

A £1 MILLION museum on the site of St Augustine's abbey in Canterbury will be opened by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, tomorrow.

The museum has been built by English Heritage with the aid of a £666,500 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to mark the 1,400th anniversary of the arrival of St Augustine in England. St Augustine founded the abbey as part of his mission to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. The museum contains an

outstanding collection of artefacts, most on display for the first time. They include a striking array of decorated medieval stonework and tiles, shrines and reliquaries. A section of the museum is devoted to surviving artefacts from the scriptorium (writing room) and library.

The museum opens to the public on Monday (daily 10am to 6pm until October 31, 10am to 4pm November 1 to March 31; admission £2, £1.50 pensioners and students, £1 children over 5).



Barbara Marlow is a guardian of the Shrine of Our Lady in Walsingham, Norfolk, where on Monday thousands will visit a reputed replica of the Virgin Mary's house

Our mission is to celebrate reasons to be cheerful

ONE of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is joy and, as I look around at my fellow worshippers in church, I often wonder where it is.

Would not a more joyful and celebratory atmosphere encourage those searching for a deeper meaning to life to pursue the path of Christian discipleship? For mission to be effective we need not only faith and conviction but joy and hope — an optimistic outlook on life.

That certainly seems to have been the attitude of St Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory I from Rome to preach the Gospel in England. We celebrate the 1,400th anniversary of his arrival on these shores over this weekend. On Monday, the Archbishop of Canterbury will lead a

service of thanksgiving in Canterbury Cathedral for our Christian heritage. And joy will be at the heart of our worship.

Mission is to let others know what we stand for; hence, the modern idea of mission statements which tell others what the parish, school or community is trying to achieve. To do this we need to witness to our belief, not in a party-political or "show-off" way, but by gently and faithfully allowing others to see what makes us tick and how God helps us to be ourselves.

On Bank Holiday Monday there is another mission celebration taking place. Thousands of pilgrims will gather at the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk for

the pilgrimage marking the anniversary of Augustine's arrival and St Columba's death. This is a joyful occasion with a Mass in the abbey grounds followed by a procession of witness. The whole village is *en fête* in an atmosphere reminiscent of the Marian festivals in other parts of Europe, but we are not always blessed with the same weather.

Like Augustine, Mary responded with joy and faith to the task God gave to her. Perhaps she is one of

the best examples of the strength that comes from the joy of serving the Lord. The celebrations in Walsingham and Canterbury are the witness of thousands of people to the mission of two individuals who, with dignity and joy, have affected the lives of so many others. It is appropriate that next week's pilgrims will be welcomed at Walsingham. We are all pilgrims in life together. Whatever our background, understanding, life and visions for the future, God wants to share the joy of living with us and our task is to share that joy with others.

Not always easy. When we encounter worldwide calamities or family upsets, joy is not the first

thing that strikes us as important. But in the midst of all trouble, God has an amazing way of letting a little joy shine through the darkness. With faith and humour it becomes a positive force which helps us to understand the way God wants us to serve him. Like Mary, we can say with joy in our hearts: "I am ready to do whatever he wishes."

Barbara Marlow, a retired head teacher, is the first woman to be appointed a guardian of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.

At Your Service, Weekend, page 15

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Panic at Manchester protest camps gives way to 'normal' life: mud, razor wire, curry and poetry

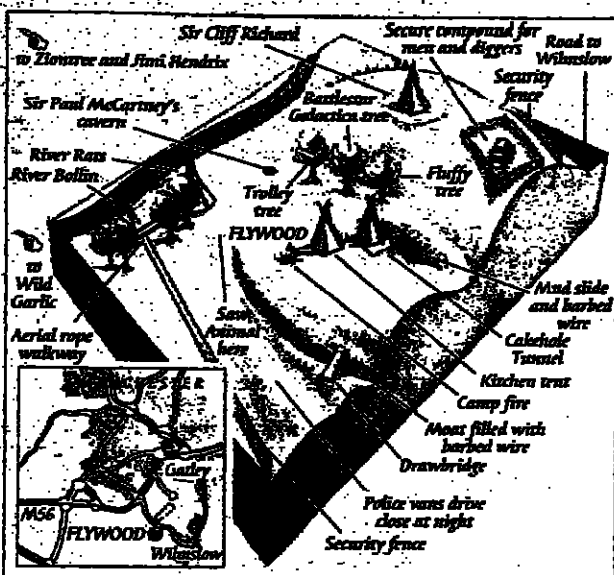
Where middle-class and Middle Earth collide

MUD, razor wire and the smell of wild garlic dominate each waking hour for the 80 protesters under siege in the Bollin valley. After four months of phoney war, evictions at the site of Manchester Airport's proposed second runway are in their fifth day since bailiffs and James Bond-like men in black clothes and balaclavas, believed to be police, raided the campsite named Zootopia, and Jim Hendrix camp. Wild Garlic camp fell two days later.

The initial panic and siege mentality have given way to what passes for normal life in the camp called Flywood Babylon Council Estate, where the perimeter fence is a nylon trip-cord and bags of urine hang from barbed wire. Alongside one swings a plaque bearing a Wordsworth poem: "Vain is the glory of the sky..."

This ancient woodland on the runway site resembles nothing so much as a politically correct *The Lord of the Rings* as mud-coated youngsters flit through trees and launch raiding parties. The mood changes hourly, depending on the availability of alcohol and the level of activity by bailiffs in black, white, orange and fluorescent yellow, as they flounder in the rain-soaked red clay, trying to clear the last protesters from Zootopia, Hendrix and Garlic. Visible

Stephen Farrell went underground to uncover the daily routine of activists resisting runway eviction



depression sets in when the crashing sound of a large tree reaches residents of Flywood and the camps known as River Rats and Sir Cliff Richard. OBE, Vegan Revolution.

The beauty of the hillside belies their treachery under-

foot. All efforts to keep my work clothes intact were wrecked when an attempt to cross from the Cakehole Tunnel to Sir Paul McCartney's Cavern necessitated a 30ft slide and messy bout of barbed-wire limbo-dancing. A

round of applause from Muppet Dave, Matt and the pregnant former nurse Denise raised my spirits briefly but failed to salvage the shredded white shirt and heavy-duty trousers.

By day three a man from *The Guardian*, a veteran of several protests, who sits at the Cakehole Tunnel entrance playing Vaughan Williams tapes, agreed on the need for a brief trip beyond the 10ft perimeter fence to stock up with supplies. We were joined by the Times photographer, who had just spend a terrifying night in an oak during a thunderstorm with a metal shopping trolley placed above his head. "It's there to lock on to when the bailiffs come," explained a protester known as Sicknote.

Getting out past the security cordon proved easy: they simply opened the gate, grinned as we waded through a quagmire and let us disappear towards Wilmslow. Getting back into the camps has proved far harder since the evictions began. Most of the protesters' efforts are devoted to sneaking food, water, reinforcements and returners over, under, through and around the miles of unbroken, patrolled fencing.

A two-mile trek across fallen willow and yet more garlic brought us opposite River



Camp life "completely warps your sense of reality", said a protester. "I come from a middle-class background"

Rats and the most vulnerable stretch of fence, patrolled by "Zero the Red Hat" and his junior white-hatted guards. The *Guardian* man opted to wade chest-deep through the River Bollin, with guards flanking him on each bank shouting "We'll have you, mate", until he reached a point beyond which, by some unspoken mutual agreement, the guards will not pass. The

alternative and drier route runs 20ft up an elm, into a harness and across 100ft of nylon-rope walkways into the safety of River Rats, where a vegan curry awaits.

A few minutes later the same security men who followed *Guardian* so assiduously were confronted by a young female television presenter. "Oh, let us in love, I could be your sister," proved

the magic password. A walk through the woods is like a stroll through Tolkien's Middle Earth: one minute you meet white boilersuit-clad bailiffs discreetly assessing the trees at their next target, and a few yards further you encounter Animal, the 17-year-old Colchester schoolgirl from the A30 protest in Devon, daubed in green and naked above the waist, digging defence trenches in the midday heat. A few hours later, fully clothed once more, she is back up her tree giving a rational and coherent account of tactics and motivation among the cave-dwellers. "We are keeping it together. If they get us off this part of the route, we will go straight to the other four-fifths they haven't fenced. This runway is not needed, it could go to Liver-

pool Airport and save this woodland. We'll keep going, we are a lot more jolly and fluffy [peaceful] than sieged at the moment."

Others, however, admit the wait is getting to them. Melanie sits in Battlestar Galactica, a vertical shanty town at Flywood, reading Henry David Thoreau's 1849 essay *Civil Disobedience*.

Man, 23, an articulate tunneller christened Posh Pixie, admits that the bizarre lifestyle gives him a sense of dislocation. "It does completely warp your sense of reality. I come from a middle-class background, and when I go back home I find myself wiping my dishwasher-clean fork on my trousers at the dinner table in front of my mother."

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Waite remonstrates with sheriff's staff

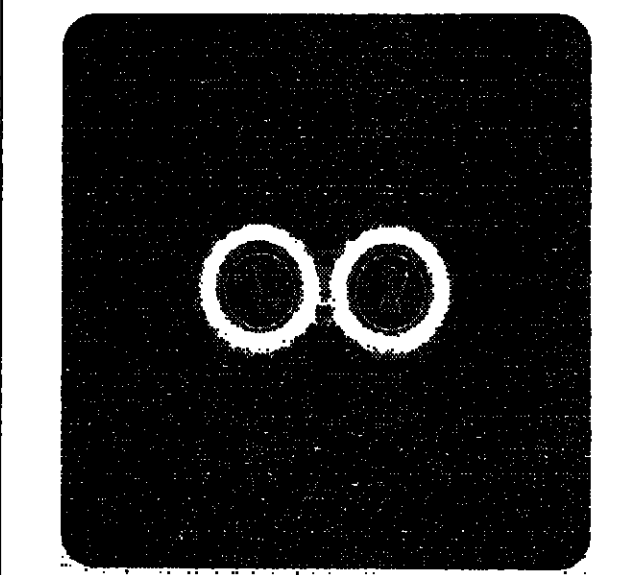
TERRY WAITE, the former Beirut hostage, remonstrated with staff working for the man in charge of evicting the protesters yesterday.

Mr Waite, who was patron of the Manchester Airport Joint Action Group, the principal objectors to the second runway, marched with 25 local people to the site - once policed by his father - in the Bollin Valley only to be told he alone would be let in.

He told representatives of Randal Hibbert, the Under Sheriff of Cheshire, that he was denying people their democratic rights. Later he told protesters through the perimeter fence: "In 20 years' time it would be the people who wreaked such environment damage who would be thrown in jail - not the protesters."

Mr Waite added afterwards that the legal process had been loaded in favour of the developers from the start: "We're not in dispute with those who carry out the evictions - it's ironic that the runway site was policed by my father 50 years ago - but with the process that allows such destructive developments to be built."

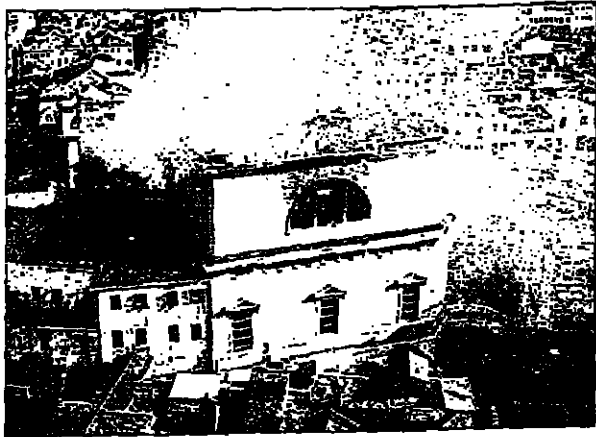
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Big ideas in a small space



Mobile telephone records 'expose arsonists of Venice opera house'



La Fenice smoulders after the January 1996 blaze

FROM RICHARD OWEN
IN ROME

TWO electricians accused of burning down La Fenice opera house in Venice, causing £120 million damage, set fire to the baroque 18th-century building because they faced late penalty payments of no more than £6,000, police said yesterday. Felice Casson, the prosecutor, said attempts by Enrico Carella, 27, and his cousin, Massimiliano Marchetti, 26, to construct "plausible alibis" for the evening of the fire 16 months ago had been exposed by examination of their mobile phone records. Signor Casson ordered the arrest

of the men, both from the Venice area, on Thursday evening. They deny the charges. Their small firm of electrical contractors, which employed six people, had been hired to carry out rewiring as part of the theatre's renovation. But they had fallen four months behind with the work, and faced penalty payments of more than £100 a day — enough to sink a business burdened with debts of £60,000. "They were desperate. They could not pay the phone bills or their employees' salaries," one police source said. Police believe the two may not have intended to gut the building but only to start a small fire. They were the last to leave La

Fenice on January 29, 1996, the day of the fire, and allegedly disconnected the alarm as they left. La Repubblica said it was appalling that working men with roots in Venice had set fire to an "international cultural jewel" for a "paltry sum", just as separatists with a similar background had mounted an armed assault on the bell tower on St Mark's Square this month. "Venice belongs to the world," the paper said. The two have been charged with arson and face jail sentences of 15 years each. Gioacchino Termini, the investigating magistrate, said that three weeks before the fire the electricians had left an oxyacetylene torch

burning, in an apparent initial arson attempt. The day before the fire, Signor Carella was discovered by a night watchman on the theatre roof — where the fire started — and when challenged said he had been watching a woman undressing in a house opposite. Signor Termini said he had proof that on the day of the fire the two men left the theatre at 9pm, half an hour later than they claimed. Police said the two men had tried to construct an alibi by claiming that they had dinner at the house of Signor Carella's girlfriend. But his mobile phone records showed that Signor Carella had telephoned the woman nine times, and she had not

responded. Signor Carella also phoned one of his employees between 8.45pm and 9.15pm to ask "whether any of the welding torches had been left on by mistake". But at that stage no one knew of the fire, and the alarm was raised at 9.10pm. The roof collapsed into the stalls at 10pm, and the resulting inferno gutted the ornate interior. Defence lawyers said the evidence was circumstantial. Signor Carella said the firm was "only two months behind schedule" and had been promised an extension until March 1996. Other firms involved in the renovation were even further behind "and any of them could have burnt down the theatre".

EU leaders enthuse over 'fresh start' from Blair

FROM CHARLES BRENNER IN NOORDWIJK, THE NETHERLANDS

AN AIR of unreality descended on the Dutch seaside town of Noordwijk yesterday as European leaders performed a rite of exorcising reality: they gave a hero's welcome to a British Prime Minister and listened when he lectured them.

Such is the relief at the removal of John Major's Euro-awkward squad that the 14 other leaders were ready to turn a blind eye to Tony Blair's continuing British recalcitrance over wide areas of European Union business and just bask in his "fresh start" enthusiasm. "This could be the moment when the ice melts," said Goran Persson, the Swedish Prime Minister.

Mr Blair's centre-left colleague was referring to Britain's glacial relations with the EU in recent years and to the chances of a breakthrough in the negotiations for a new Union treaty in Amsterdam next month.

Wim Kok, the left-wing Dutch Prime Minister and host of the Noordwijk summit, was in near-rapture over the performance of Mr Blair and Robin Cook, the Foreign Sec-

retary. "I am convinced of the sincerity of the two British ministers," he said. "They really have another language when they talk about Europe. I have a very positive feeling about their intentions."

John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, hailed his British counterpart's pragmatism, which he contrasted to Mr Major's ideological approach. Kind words also came from Romano Prodi, the Italian Prime Minister, who had been irked by Britain's claim this month that it had joined the EU's high table alongside France and Germany.

At least for the duration of a one-day summit, the EU leaders could not get enough of Mr Blair's uplifting utterances about "new Europe for the new millennium" as he set out Britain's "bottom line" for the treaty negotiation at the Amsterdam summit and called for a new focus on the nature of the Union. Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, and all the other leaders at the Dunes House hotel nodded in agreement as the new boy lectured his colleagues on his conviction that the EU had lost



Helmut Kohl of Germany, President Chirac of France, and Wim Kok and Hans van Mierlo of The Netherlands, with Tony Blair yesterday

touch with its citizens. They were too polite to note that an identical lament has been de rigueur for all EU leaders since the Maastricht treaty was finished in 1992.

Mr Blair's winning aura was almost palpable when fellow leaders jostled to have their photograph taken with him in the conference room. The newcomer's advice was sought by colleagues facing imminent electoral tests, ac-

ording to his aides. The French parliamentary elections start tomorrow. Mr Bruton has just called a general election and Herr Kohl goes to the polls next year.

Mr Blair's aides noted that the Government's hefty majority gave him the clout to prescribe remedies for Europe's ills. "This majority means he can actually deliver," said one. Continental officials also noted a degree of

irony because Mr Blair's credibility is bolstered by Britain's economic success, generated under the Conservatives. Despite sniping against what much of the Continent sees as Britain's social failures, the rest of the EU is increasingly accepting the merits of the "Anglo-Saxon" market model for the economy.

Officials noted evidence of Mr Blair's intense homework on the European way of

business. At a session with Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission, Mr Blair impressed officials by speaking without notes or any assistance. "He really knew the dossier. He was extremely well prepared," said Klaus Van der Pas, a spokesman for Mr Santer.

For all the indulgence over Mr Blair's maiden EU foray, the verdict on his "tough love" approach was mixed. Some

officials were grumbling that the honeymoon would end soon if Mr Blair refused to bridge on key areas such as centralising control of frontiers. "It sounds like eternal Albion... Thatcher and Major with a nicer face," said a French official.

Others sensed the makings of compromise in Amsterdam, which could see Britain giving ground "despite the rhetoric about sovereignty".

Israel 'to be nuclear for years'

Jerusalem: The director of the atomic energy commission in the Israeli Prime Minister's office was quoted yesterday as saying that years of democracy were needed in the Arab states before Israel could give up its nuclear capability (Christopher Walker writes). "Haaretz" said his remarks, delivered on the eve of the general election last May, had only now been made available. "Before Israel agrees to Arab demands," Haaretz quoted Gideon Frank as saying, "many years of full diplomatic and economic relations must pass without a war."

Amnesty plea to Mugabe

Harare: Amnesty International has appealed to President Mugabe of Zimbabwe in an open letter to set an example to other African heads of state and make amends for the atrocities committed by his troops in the western provinces of Matabeleland (Jan Raath writes). The group asked him to act before he becomes chairman of the Organisation of African Unity next month.

Jordan to be given water

Jerusalem: Israel and Jordan have resolved a two-week crisis over a deal to ease the kingdom's water shortage. Ariel Sharon, the National Infrastructure Minister, said after a meeting in Amman. The two sides agreed that until a desalination project was completed, Israel would give Jordan water, possibly from the Galilee. (Reuters)

Rare Nigeria pictures lost

New York: A rare collection of photographs of colonial Nigeria, taken by a British government official in the 1950s, was thrown mistakenly in a Virginia rubbish dump and is feared lost (Tunku Varadarajan writes). The photographs, taken by Ian Brinkworth, were to have been posted to the Smithsonian Institution.

Man catches falling child

Moscow: Irina Smirnova, 40, threw her daughter, six, from a fourth-floor balcony, but a neighbour, Gocha Lashvili, 26, ran on to his balcony and caught and saved the child, a newspaper here said. When the police tried to enter the flat, the mother, who had lost her job at a research institute, jumped to her death. (AP)

Iran seeks Syrian aid to bypass spy curbs

IRAN has asked Syria for permission to use its espionage infrastructure in Europe in an attempt to circumvent tighter controls on Tehran's spies, according to Western security sources (Michael Evans writes).

A senior Iranian official is understood to have made a formal proposal to Syria to ensure that Iranian spies can continue to function on European territory, using well-established Syrian espionage outlets.

An intelligence link between Iran and Syria would be the latest evidence of an increasing rapprochement between the two countries. In February, they signed agreements for co-operation in communications, electricity, trade, oil, transport and agriculture. A protocol was also signed for co-operation in research and development and in military industry.

Syria and Iran are already collaborating on improving the Scud C missile, which both countries have bought from North Korea and China.

Big turnout helps poll chances of Tehran moderate

FROM MICHAEL THEODOULOU IN NICOSIA

IRANIANS turned out in large numbers yesterday to elect a new President in a fierce contest between hardline and moderate factions of the Islamic state.

Both the front-runners are 54-year-old clerics, but for the first time since the 1979 Islamic Revolution many Iranians sense the possibility of real change. Diplomats said even if Mohammad Khatami, the moderate candidate, lost, Tehran's conservative clergy would be under pressure to address the frustrations of the people. "They will have to rely on more than just the Koran and anti-Western sentiment," one envoy said.

The incumbent President Rafsanjani, who has to step down after serving two four-year terms, told the 33 million eligible voters to cast their ballots or answer to God. Long queues were reported outside many of the 30,000 polling stations.

The large turnout was expected to boost the chances of Mr Khatami, the former Cul-

ture Minister who has the support of artists, intellectuals and urban youths longing for more freedom. He also has the important women's vote after his rival, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, the former Speaker, alienated many by pledging a crackdown on those daring to flout the Islamic dress code. By contrast, Mr Khatami has promised to appoint a woman to his Cabinet.

Mr Khatami was mobbed by supporters when he cast his vote in north Tehran, where his portrait is festooned on thousands of cars. Until Mr Khatami's entry in the contest, Mr Nateq-Nouri was expected to secure a landslide win.

Fears that the conservative clergy would do everything possible to prevent a Khatami victory forced both Ayatollah Khamenei and Hojatoleslam Rafsanjani to reassure voters that the election would be fair. If no candidate wins more than 50 per cent of the vote, the two leading candidates from a pack of four will face a run-off, possibly next Friday.

Romanian military gives Dracula a whirl

FROM ROGER BOYES

DRACULA is about to bring terror back to Transylvania. Romania plans to name its new combat helicopter after the Transylvanian bloodsucker in an attempt to frighten its enemies.

The AH1 RO-Dracula is to be built with the help of capital from the American Bell Helicopter Textron company in a factory in Cluj. That was the place where Vlad the Impaler — Bram Stoker's model for his fictional Dracula — stuck Transylvanian Saxons for non-payment of taxes. The sharp-ended poles pierced the body from bottom to head and the victims lined the narrow mountain roads, an example to all 15th-century tax dodgers. Similar deterrent measures were applied to Turks.

Prince Vlad Teres ("the Impaler") was also known as Vlad Dracul (Dragon) and was regarded for centuries as a national hero because of the way that he checked Turkish expansion. Bram Stoker, researching his novel in the British Library, picked up

folklore about vampirism in the Romanian peasantry and attributed these qualities to Vlad, Nicolae Ceausescu, the country's Communist dictator, did not appreciate the poetic licence, especially since his critics started to draw parallels between him and Vlad. Dracula became taboo.

Now there are annual Dracula congresses, including a witches' trial and a masked ball. The Dracula helicopter is the first time for many decades that the myth of Vlad has been used to scare off enemies.

The other important feature of the new helicopter is American involvement. Romania wants to be in the first wave of Nato enlargement. However, analysts believe that it will have to stay outside the alliance for at least a decade.

□ Slovaks vote: Slovakia began voting yesterday in a referendum to decide whether it should be a member of the Nato alliance. Once rated as a promising candidate, it has slipped in Western esteem because of doubts about its democratic practices.



Dracula, here played by Christopher Lee, inspired a helicopter with teeth

10p

FEATURE

An interview with actor Keith Allen, the thinking woman's Oliver Reed.

THE TIMES

ARTS

A report on the Royal Shakespeare Company's tour of Pakistan.

IN MONDAY'S
10P
TIMES

CRICKET

The final one-day international between England and Australia.

GRAND-PRIX

A full report on the Spanish Grand Prix.

Yeltsin picks top nuclear strategist to reform military

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW

A CAREER soldier, General Igor Sergeev, yesterday accepted what many regard as the toughest job in Russia when he was confirmed as Defence Minister.

In a brief meeting at the Kremlin, President Yeltsin officially appointed the respected General Sergeev to his new post and named General Anatoli Kvashnin as the new Chief of the General Staff.

Despite crumbling morale, huge budget cuts and rampant corruption in the ranks, the two men have been given the near-impossible task of turning the military into a cost-effective, motivated and competent professional force by the turn of the century.

In contrast to the two last Defence Ministers, General Pavel Grachev and General Igor Rodionov, both combat soldiers who fought in Afghanistan, the new minister has never fired a shot in anger and spends his free time reading classical literature. Nevertheless, the reputation he established in a career spent in the Strategic Nuclear Forces, which he commanded for the past five years, should equip him well for the challenges ahead.

With the disastrous war in Chechnya over and no obvious military threat, General Sergeev's main enemy lies within. In pushing through reforms and attempting to slim down the bloated 1.7 million-man army, he will have to battle with Soviet-era generals opposed to change and the inevitable Kremlin infighting, which cost his predecessor his job after only ten months.

Yuri Baturin, President Yeltsin's top defence adviser, said General Sergeev's appointment marked a break in tradition, whereby only generals from the ground forces made it to the very top.

"I think it is obvious that the Strategic Nuclear Forces today form the backbone of our defence," Mr. Baturin, who heads the Defence Council, said. "Also, Igor Sergeev turned out to be a very thrifty manager. Not a single kopek [penny] in the Strategic Nuclear Forces was wasted. The situation is much better than the other services."

While stories about graft in the top ranks of the military are commonplace, the forces under General Sergeev's command have had a relatively clean sheet. Western military experts also point out, with evident relief, that the

nuclear forces have maintained professional standards, long abandoned elsewhere in the army.

General Sergeev said before his appointment that he viewed Russia's huge nuclear arsenal as its best guarantee for defence, particularly at a time of cutbacks. "The Strategic Nuclear Forces can evolve into a real nucleus of Russian military might, which will ensure strategic stability in the world, deterrence and the maintenance of Russia's status as a great power," he said recently. He is also regarded as a pragmatist in dealings with the West and has endorsed deeper cutbacks in nuclear forces set out in the START 3 arms reduction agreement with America.

Born to a mining family in Ukraine in 1938, he attended a naval college in the Black Sea before embarking on a 30-year career in the nuclear forces. In spite of his qualifications, General Sergeev's position is far from secure. Pundits were predicting yesterday that his appointment will only be a stopgap until a civilian candidate is selected.

Mr. Yeltsin has demanded that a blueprint for reform be ready for discussion by June 25. If the Russian leader is not satisfied that the military is finally prepared to reform, General Sergeev faces an ignominious fate like that of his predecessor, who was given a public dressing down before being sacked on Thursday.



Sergeev: has never fired a shot in anger

Letters, page 23



President Lukashenko of Belarus and President Yeltsin of Russia at the Kremlin yesterday after signing a "union treaty". The treaty sets out the terms for greater co-operation between the two Slavic neighbours, but falls well short of reintegrating the two former Soviet republics (Richard Beeston writes). During a ceremony in the Kremlin's Vladimir Hall, the two Presidents

Russia and Belarus sign union treaty

idents embraced each other like lost friends. The long-awaited document read more like a declaration of intent than the cornerstone of a marriage. "Our union is aimed at forging further

relations of brotherhood, friendship and co-operation," President Yeltsin said. Nevertheless, the document provides little in the way of concrete measures, dealing mainly with declarations about the rights of the individual and pledges to co-ordinate in future on foreign policy, fighting crime and promoting security. Neither side relinquished any sovereign powers.

Bavaria jails Serb for war crimes

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

GERMANY yesterday concluded the first war crimes trial on its soil since the postwar Nuremberg tribunal by sentencing a Bosnian Serb to five years in jail for his part in the massacre of Muslims.

The verdict, passed by a Bavarian court, underlined how entangled Germany has become in the complex Bosnian situation. The Serb, Novislav Djajic, was one of about 50 people being investigated by German authorities for war crimes committed in former Yugoslavia.

Hours after the verdict was announced, two German soldiers were killed and a third seriously wounded in Bosnia. The shooting was apparently an accident and unconnected with the Munich trial, but to many Germans it woke dormant fears about the potential costs of Germany's growing involvement. About 3,500 German troops are based in Bosnia in the first combat deployment since the Second World War.

Earlier in the week the German — and, in particular, the Bavarian — Government came in for criticism by the United States for over-zealous attempts to repatriate to Bosnia some of the 300,000 people who sought refuge in Germany during the conflict.

"It's only a matter of time before linkages are made," a German commentator said yesterday. "A German court sentencing a war criminal can translate quickly into German soldiers being shot at in Bosnia. Forced repatriation of Bosnian refugees could destroy the goodwill that we are building up by taking part in armed overseas missions."

So far, war crimes trials have been held in The Hague by the international tribunal, thus removing specific targets of revenge by aggrieved groups in former Yugoslavia. Many of the defendants in The Hague were first arrested in Germany. German law allows courts to try suspected criminals, arrested in Germany for genocidal crimes abroad — a legacy of the postwar order when Nazi criminals slipped back into Germany, assuming they could not be tried for killings abroad.

Corruption and cash shortages bury goal of modernising forces

By MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

THE vision of a modern, all-professional Russian military force, first enunciated by President Gorbachev in 1989 and more recently by Boris Yeltsin in a statement last year, has been buried by corruption at high level, lack of money and willpower and a serious deterioration in combat effectiveness.

Mr Gorbachev set a deadline of

the year 2000 to reform the Armed Forces. Mr Yeltsin's deadline slipped to 2005. Western defence experts believe that Mr Yeltsin's timetable is as unrealistic as Mr Gorbachev's 1989 proposal. Some changes have been made, but the

reforms have been patchy. The total active Armed Forces have been cut to about 1.3 million from more than three million ten years ago, but many of the troops are poorly educated, have criminal

records and suffer from ill health and drug abuse.

Contract military personnel have been recruited for three-year periods to begin replacing the conscript system. But the plan to end conscription by 2005 has been undermined by lack of funding. A professional army will be more expensive and, with the defence budget having fallen in real terms by 45 per cent since 1992, there is unlikely to be enough money available to attract the right quality of recruits.

Some elements of the Armed Forces have been reorganised to change the balance towards more rapidly mobile units. Last year it was announced that the command of airborne forces would be switched to local districts for deploying to "hot spots" in and out of Russia. Some units were reallocated, but the process seems to have stopped.

The failure to reform and the lack of funds have reduced the forces to

a sorry state. They no longer have the capability of mounting a big combined-arms operation, involving integrated land-air-sea action because of limited training and poor maintenance of equipment.

It is estimated that only about 4 per cent of helicopters, mechanised infantry combat vehicles and armoured paratroop personnel carriers meet Western standards. The International Institute for Strategic Studies said that much of the

equipment had "simply rusted away" and some hardware had been sold by local commanders.

The replacement of General Pavel Grachev as Defence Minister by General Igor Rodionov last June was supposed to herald a new era. General Rodionov was seen as the minister of reform. But he was quickly disenchanted and by year's end was describing himself as the "minister of a disintegrating army and a dying navy".

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ENCH ELECTIONS

Yawns and giggles greet Prime Minister's leaden lecture at last big rally of Centre-Right

PATRICK HOWARD/CPA



Alain Juppé, left, and François Léotard, champions of the Centre-Right, taste some Beaujolais while on the campaign trail in Pommiers.

Tongue-tied Juppé leads campaign's awkward squad

THE 2,000-strong crowd packed into the Lyons conference hall was whooping. The heavyweight dignitaries of the French Cabinet were ranged across the stage in a mass display of solidarity. The experienced orators of the Centre-Right coalition had whipped the faithful into loud ecstasies with patriotic sentiments and fighting words.

Then Alain Juppé, the Prime Minister, approached the microphone for his last public address before tomorrow's first-round vote in a parliamentary election that will decide the shape of the Government for the next five years and seal his political

From the moment his mouth opened, the mood seemed to change and deaden. The flags and banners were stilled; the rally audience, which moments earlier had



Ben Macintyre reports from Lyons on the finale of a lacklustre electoral campaign by the governing parties that failed to deliver the much-needed fizz and sparkle

cheered every phrase from the podium, became suddenly subdued and watchful. Mijppé has a strange talent for cauterising emotion, for turning what could be a direct personal appeal into a lecture. Suddenly, in place of the raw but rousing rhetoric, the hall was echoing to statistics, percentages and reasoned argument.

The moment encapsulated M Jupp's two, bruising years in office. Brilliant but distant, dogged and deathly dry, his efforts to reform France, often with considerable courage, have consistently been overshadowed by his inability to communicate, to foster and retain enthusiasm and loyalty.

Even the senior figures of the party began to fidget. One of the local candidates yawned. Charles Pasqua, the veteran Gaullist who has often attacked M. Juppé in the past, giggled and scribbled a note which was passed around, earning a sharp sideways look from François Lortat, leader

of the UDF, the Gaullists' junior coalition partners. M. Juppé, the most unpopular Prime Minister in the history of the Fifth Republic, was slowly warming into his

warming marquis speaking style in which he signals the moment to cheer by suddenly raising his voice. The listeners obliged, and by the time M. Juppé reached the finale with "vive" Jacques Chirac! Vive la République! "Vive la France!" they were a

The Prime Minister and head of the Gaullist RPR party ought to be the coalition's single most crucial asset after the President himself, but he

widely seen as a liability, living contradiction of the promise to furnish a "healer." The materialist in Loun was M. Jupp's first and only public appearance last week. His aides said he was devoting himself to media interviews. His critics alleged that he was being kept from the limelight by a "very powerful off force."

Before the mass rally Thursday night he travelled Mount Buisson in the heart of Bearpaw country, but as

into a crowd in the bright sunshine, he still seemed a man out of place. M Jupphe has small talk. His few jokes are heavily ironic. He wants to know the exact percentage of Benjaluins exported to China. Not since campaigning in America with Dan Quayle, the former Vice-President, have I come across a candidate more ineffectually drawn to the pot-holes and pratfalls of the campaign trail, more destined to reinforce his own stereotyped image.

Touring a housing estate in Lyons, he paused to approach two burly men in a car, not noticing the large albatross in the back. M Jupphe proffered his hand through the window. The dog lunged furiously. M Jupphe recoiled, having narrowly escaped becoming the first one-handed Prime Minister in French history.

Eloquent on such subjects as deficit reduction and unemployment, M. Juppé became peculiarly tongue-tied when faced with the average voter. "Madame ..

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plied. "There, that's enough. You can photocopy that and sell it to your friends." It was intended to be funny, and from almost anyone else might have been. The child looked bemused.

However maladroit he may appear in public, M Jupp carries with him an air of loftiness and assurance that many have dismissed as arrogance but which may stem directly from his faith in M Chirac's personal support.

The President has had ample opportunity to replace him over the past two years but has not done so and, if the Centre Right attains a sizeable majority, M Juppé may find himself once again wearing the Prime Minister's mantle he so covetously carries with such abandon.

□ **Marseilles:** An aide of the National Front Mayor in a southern town of Vitrolles was injured and taken to hospital after a clash with anti-racism militants. (Reuters)

Le Pen's preference for Left adds to coalition troubles

By BEN MAGNITTA

AT 8 PM tomorrow, politicians, pollsters, pundits and the public will begin teasing out the significance from the results of first round of voting in the French legislative elections.

Polls published throughout the week on the Internet indicated that the side-swinging left-leaning surveys in France in the week before an election have predicted a reduced final majority for the center-right coalition of between 47 and 51 seats. But an unpublished poll, commissioned by the coalition itself, shows the left-wing Opposition gaining ground again.

The first round will dictate which candidates (usually only a handful) are elected outright, with 50 per cent or more of the vote, and which will go through to the second round on June 1 with at least 16.5 per cent.

A key indicator of the final outcome will be the number of three-way races between the Socialist-Communist Alliance, the centre-right coalition and the far-right National Front, which has vowed to

light on wherever possible and may attract crucial votes from the Right, thus increasing the possibility of Socialist victory.

Polls predict the National Front share of the vote will grow from its level of 12.8 per cent at the last elections, and anything over a 17 per cent score for the Front in the first



Le Pen says left-wing victory is preferable

round is likely to create serious problems for the centre-right coalition.

A growing dispute within the National Front has made that calculation more unpredictable. The leader of the extreme-right party, Jean-Marie Le Pen, has caused confusion by suggesting that a leftist-wing victory would be

preferable to a renewed majority for the Centre-Right - to the fury of some of his party's candidates facing left-wing opponents who fear this could lose them vital votes.

A poor first-round showing by the Centre-Right will also increase pressure on President Chirac to replace Alain Juppé, the Prime Minister. Most crucially, pollsters predict that up to a third of voters will fail to cast their ballots in a reflection of disillusionment with politics.

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THOMSON

Blast victim denies McVeigh was on board rented truck

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

THE Oklahoma City bombing trial took a dramatic twist last night when a woman testified for the first time she had seen two men get out of a rented truck filled with explosives but neither was Timothy McVeigh, the chief suspect.

Dana Bradley, who lost a leg in the attack that killed 168 adults and children, had been called as a material witness for the defence of Mr McVeigh, 29, a decorated Gulf War veteran.

In the past, Ms Bradley has always described seeing only one olive-skinned and thick-set individual climbing from the yellow Ryder truck minutes before the blast. But in the Denver courtroom yesterday, she testified for the first time that she had seen two people, but not Mr McVeigh. Judge Richard Matsch was forced to recess the trial while she talked to her lawyer about the sudden revelation.

Although she appeared to have changed her story, the Bradley testimony is certain to lend weight to the defence theory of a wider conspiracy involving individuals other than Mr McVeigh. She lost her mother and two children in the explosion and her sister was seriously injured.

The defence was equally stunned by her testimony and the defendant appeared taken aback as he stared intently at



Marshall: believes a 169th person died

the young black woman when she put her head in her hands and said: "I seen two men get out of the truck."

Ms Bradley described the second man as white and said she did not think it was Mr McVeigh. She also said she had a poor memory and a history of mental illness.

The defence team, led by Stephen Jones, had earlier sown further seeds of doubt about the prosecution case by suggesting that a mystery bomber may have actually died when the 4,000lb of ammonium nitrate was detonated outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995.

Thomas Marshall, a British

forensic pathologist who headed a government forensics unit in Northern Ireland, said he believed that an unknown 169th person had died in the explosion because investigators have been unable to match a leg found in the rubble with any known victim.

"All I can say is this must represent another victim," said Mr Marshall. "I am forming my opinion on the fact that no other part of that body is available, just a leg."

The mystery bomber theory was also given credence by the testimony of a Chinese restaurant employee in Junction City, Kansas, who made a takeaway delivery to a hotel room that prosecutors say Mr McVeigh occupied four nights before the bombing. He said the room was occupied by another man.

Furthermore, the agent who rented the Ryder truck that carried the bomb said he could not identify Mr McVeigh 30ft away in the courtroom.

The defence is hoping to counter the prosecution's powerful circumstantial evidence that explosive traces were found on Mr McVeigh's clothing, that he was tracked in the days before the blast and was arrested 90 minutes afterwards, driving north from Oklahoma City. Mr McVeigh faces a possible death sentence if convicted.



Opposition supporters flee teargas fired by the police after a Jakarta election rally turned into a riot yesterday

Riot ends Indonesia election campaign

FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT IN JAKARTA

INDONESIA'S general election campaign came to a violent end yesterday as police and troops in Jakarta fired rifles, rubber bullets and teargas to disperse thousands of stone-throwing supporters of rival parties.

Several people were injured

and more than a dozen arrested as the authorities fought for more than four hours to control the rioters in a southern suburb of the capital. Tanks and armoured cars were deployed after order had been restored to prevent further clashes.

The violence started when fighting broke out after heated exchanges between supporters of Golkar, the government

party, and the minority Muslim-orientated United Development Party (PPP). Golkar flags and banners were burnt in the riot.

The next five days are a cooling-off period before voting on May 29. Only three parties are allowed by law in Indonesia: Golkar, the PPP and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). They are competing for 425 of the 500

seats in the House of Representatives. The remaining 75 seats are reserved for the armed forces, still considered the most powerful social and political force.

The result is a foregone conclusion. Backed by the armed forces and the bureaucracy, Golkar is expected to win by a landslide, as it has done in five previous elections under President Suharto.

B52 pilot resigned to avoid jail term

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

KELLY FLINN, America's first woman B52 pilot, agreed to resign from the US Air Force rather than face a court martial for adultery only after realising it looked more and more likely she would go to prison.

Her mother, Mary Flinn, said angrily: "There was a strong possibility that Kelly would end up a convict. What good is going to jail just to make a point? This was indeed a travesty of justice."

Lieutenant Flinn, described yesterday as physically and emotionally exhausted at her base in North Dakota, had faced a maximum sentence of nine and a half years. Military records show that those who lie about adultery, as she did, often spend several months in prison before a dishonourable discharge.

The family realised the air force was out to make an example of Lieutenant Flinn when the Chief of Staff, General Ronald Fogleman, declared the issue was not her adultery, but her lying about it and disobeying orders to end her affair with a married civilian. Her lawyer, Frank Spinner, said the remarks irreparably damaged Lieutenant Flinn's chance of a fair trial.

Kinshasa protesters denounce 'dictator' Kabila

FROM DAVID ORR IN KINSHASA



Tshisekedi: possible offer of vice-presidency

YOUTHS marched through the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo yesterday, chanting "Kabila is a dictator". Hours earlier, the rebel alliance of Laurent Kabila, the self-declared President, announced a government in the former Zaire that did not include Etienne Tshisekedi, the main opposition party leader.

Mr Tshisekedi, who enjoys considerable popularity in Kinshasa, has dismissed the new administration as illegitimate. He says that unless there is a meeting between himself and the

alliance leader, the people must reject the new regime. "Until today I haven't been able to meet my brother [Kabila]," Mr Tshisekedi told supporters at his home in the capital. "His collaborators have done everything to stop me from seeing him."

Of the 13 Cabinet posts announced yesterday, nine went to the alliance, two to the opposition Patriotic Front and two to members of Mr Tshisekedi's opposition UDPS. The pair were soon disowned by their party. Another seven Cabinet posts have yet to be announced.

It is understood that Mr Tshisekedi was offered the vice-

presidency by the alliance's second-in-command, Deogratias Buzera. When questioned about this, Mr Tshisekedi finally admitted: "Maybe."

□ Rabat: Mobutu Sese Seko, Zaire's deposed ruler, flew from Togo to Morocco and was whisked to a beach resort on the second leg of his flight into exile. The presence of Mr Mobutu, 66, had distressed his old friend, Gnassingbe Eyadema, the Togo ruler. Under pressure from the opposition, who said the deposed ruler's presence was a disgrace, Mr Eyadema refused to allow in 80 of the 155 people following Mr Mobutu into exile. (AP)

Interpol aids lion-hunt inquiry

FROM INIGO GILMORE IN JOHANNESBURG

INTERPOL agents have been invited to assist South African detectives in an investigation into lion "trophy" hunting, after the practice was exposed in a documentary screened on British television.

About 30 Interpol wildlife enforcement officers from across the world will fly into South Africa this weekend for a meeting with the South African Police's Endangered Species Protection Unit in the Northern Province on Monday. The discussions will ex-

amine the progress of investigations into lion hunting and explore joint operations to curb the illegal smuggling and killing of animals.

Eight South African police officers have begun investigating the video evidence from the *Cook Report* showing how lions are drugged and shot by overseas hunters. The recording was made by documentary producers working undercover to expose hunting agents. The agents offer hunting trips to wealthy businessmen who pay upwards of £12,000 to shoot wild animals for trophies.

The programme has provoked international outrage and put pressure on President Mandela's Government to take firm action against the perpetrators.

The documentary shows how a lioness was lured from the Kruger National Park with bait placed under the wire fencing before being shot in full view of her cubs. The tourist then poses with the dead animal before it is skinned for a trophy.

The documentary claimed about 300 lions could be under threat from the hunting operations.

THE SUNDAY TIMES



HITLER & GELI

The dictator and his murderous passion for his niece



CHARLES MURRAY on why IQ makes all the difference between success and failure in life



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OPINION

The Royal Opera House must decide whether it is a public amenity or a private club



OPERA

Glyndebourne makes the best possible case for Britten's pacifist opera
Owen Wingrave

THE TIMES
ARTS



CABARET

Ruthie Henshall impresses at the Festival Hall, once she stops trying to be the second Ethel Merman



MUSIC

A late Schubert mass is sung by the Vienna Singverein with consummate authority

Glenista McIntosh resigns as chief executive of the Royal Opera House because the stress makes her poorly. Mary Allen, instantly appointed as her replacement, goes on sick leave from her job as Arts Council secretary-general. Cosh, its just like Act IV of *La Bohème*. Even the thought of running Covent Garden makes you feel very, very ill.

But that's no surprise. Say the words "Royal Opera House" to a music lover and you get one of three reactions. The first is touching admiration for a "centre of excellence" that keeps Britain's reputation high in the lyric world. Presumably there are folk who subscribe to that view — otherwise why would Covent Garden receive a £20 million annual subsidy, plus a £78 million lottery handout for closure and redevelopment? But the funny thing is, all of them seem to be abroad at the moment.

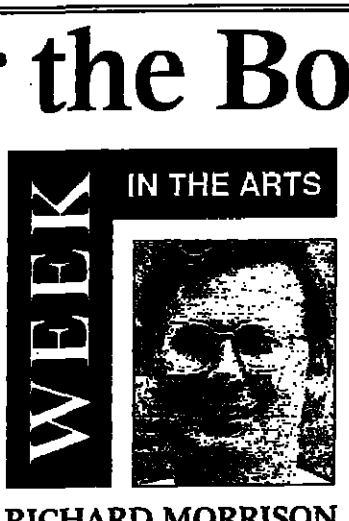
Then there are the sophisticates who say: look, we know Covent

Garden has been in chaos for years; that the closure plans are (in the memorable words of the Arts Council chairman) a shambles; that the taxpayer is being taken for a ride; that top Covent Garden jobs are handed out without a semblance of open competition; and that nobody on an ordinary income can afford to visit the place more than once a decade — but hey! That's opera for you! Debates, walkouts, snobbery, strikes, deficits, mad prices, stitch-ups... it's all part of the show. For a mere £20 million, Britain gets an annual season ticket to the longest-running farce since Brian Rix pulled up his trousers.

There is, however, a third reaction. Pure fury. Opera and ballet are noble arts. The Covent Garden management has turned them into bywords for irrelevance, waste and incompetence. No true music lover can or should forgive that.

I used to hold the second view: detached amusement, mingled with a certain professional gratitude towards an institution that supplied so many riving yams of crassness and excess. But now I have joined the angry brigade. And it wasn't even the murk surrounding McIntosh's resignation that did it. That only reinforced the image of Covent Garden as the Valhalla of bungling.

No, what angers me is the realisation that any chance of reforming Covent Garden is about to disappear for ever. We have a new Government avowedly committed to "the people's priorities". Well, you don't have to be a rabid socialist to feel that Covent Garden is way out of step with "the people". We also have the opera house about to close for two years. If Chris Smith, the new Heritage Secretary, doesn't bash some sense into the Bow St bodgers now, he



RICHARD MORRISON

never will. On Thursday night he did at least make a speech knocking "elitist" arts organisations that charge ridiculous seat prices. But veiled threats aren't enough to deal with this bunch.

Three things must change. First,

Covent Garden must behave like a public amenity, not a private club. It's intolerable that a handful of very rich patrons, rattling their jewellery menacingly, can impose policy on the most highly subsidised arts organisation in Britain. It would be intolerable even if they were any good at it. The fact that they have made a pig's ear of the place adds injury to insult.

Privatising Covent Garden completely — turning it into an all-year-round Glyndebourne — would actually not be a bad idea. But if that is what we wanted we should never have committed £78 million of public money to its redevelopment. Now the moral imperative must be to open it up.

Of course, Covent Garden's patrons would not interfere so much if they had respect for the management. Which brings us to the second change. Every successful opera house has one strong,

visionary leader. Enlightened dictatorship is the only thing that works. Mostly such figures are conductors. Rarely are they shoe heiresses or jumped-up PR suits.

Look around. Riccardo Muti is both iron fist and velvet glove at La Scala. Nothing moves at the New York Met without a nod from James Levine. And the Kirov owes all its current sheen to the intimidating genius of Valery Gergiev.

So where is Covent Garden's tough maestro? The answer is that it hasn't had one since Solti, 30 years ago. Haitink, the present music director, is a superb conductor but no bruiser. The place needs a firebrand who will inspire the performers, charm the patrons and terrorise those meddling, muddling board members.

But what brilliant conductor would wish to take on an organisation with Covent Garden's chronic

financial problems? Which brings us to the third matter. London needs, and can support, one great opera company — not two that are both crippled by debt. This month the spotlight happens to be on Covent Garden's turmoil, but the stories of crisis emerging from English National Opera are no less sensational.

The blunt fact is that London's opera and dance provision is an archaic hunchback that must be totally restructured. Over the years, report after report has come from the Arts Council, yet the tough decisions are always dodged. Chris Smith must impose some logic — some social justification — on this subsidised anarchy, even if he has to trample all over the famous "arm's length principle" in the process.

It pains me to write that. Politicians should keep their hands off the arts as much as possible. But when the kiddies are tearing apart their playpen, nanny is permitted to bang some heads together. And confiscate their pocket-money too, if necessary.

Time's up for the Bow St bodgers

Full military honours

Of the two Britten operas hitherto regarded as ugly ducklings in the canon, one — *Gloriana* — has been turned by the passing of time and Phyllida Lloyd's mould-breaking Opera North production into the most glorious of swans. Whether or not Glyndebourne can do the same for his pacifist opera, *Owen Wingrave* (1970) remains to be seen: it is a rather tougher nut to crack.

Some of the problems may stem from its origins as a BBC TV commission; emphasis on



Ann Taylor as Kate and Gerald Finley as Owen Wingrave in a cast that refuses to be overshadowed by its predecessors

Owen Wingrave
Glyndebourne

narrative values and naturalistic conversation may then have been thought appropriate to the medium, but they mean that the first act takes an awfully long time to get going, and once it has done so the piece seems to change tack: what has been developed as a moral argument between Owen and his military family suddenly turns into a Jamesian ghost story. In presenting the case for his passionately held beliefs, Britten could perhaps have chosen tougher subject matter.

But good for Glyndebourne, bringing their 1995 touring production into the festival repertoire. Daniel Dooper's revision of the Robin Phillips production doesn't solve all

the physical problems inherited from television — the odd split-screen episode, and opportunities not taken up at the time for voiceover — and Hisham Ali's set relies on gauzes where light might have been more effective.

But for once an opera is not over-directed, which allows you to concentrate on the music, greatly to the work's advantage. However diffuse Myfanwy Piper's libretto may be, Britten's score is ideally

concentrated, and Ivor Bolton's steadily flowing conducting and excellent playing from the London Philharmonic allow you to follow closely the purely musical argument.

One other inherited problem involves casting: it is hard not to keep hearing Peter Pears, Sylvia Fisher and Jennifer Vyvyan, so closely did the composer tailor the writing to their capabilities. But the hand-picked Glyndebourne cast successfully overcomes

this problem: the piece is, truth to tell, rather more evenly sung than in 1970. Gerald Finley is quite outstanding in the title role, his dark mahogany baritone capable of real heroic edge in his great Peace aria. The sympathetic roles of Mr and Mrs Coyle — proprietors of the military canteen, and representing us, the audience — are beautifully taken by Steven Page and Vivian Tierney, though the latter could sharp-

en her diction. Christopher Ventris shows equal tact as the Mooray Henry Lechmere, and Eldwen Harry (Miss Wingrave), Elizabeth Gale (Miss Julian), Ann Taylor (Kate) and — especially — Neil Jenkins (Sir Philip) resolutely decline to be overshadowed by their predecessors. Musically this is a very satisfying evening; dramatically the verdict has to remain "not proven".

RODNEY MILNES

Sweetly seasoned

CONCERT

Vienna Singverein
Queen Elizabeth Hall

LONDON Austrians were out in force for Wednesday night's visit from the Vienna Singverein and Rainer Küchl, former leader of the Vienna Philharmonic. In these days of hyped youth, how refreshing to have a London debut by so seasoned a violinist: the self-effacing 57-year-old Vienna Hochschule professor gave a performance of the Beethoven Violin Concerto of simplicity and sweetness.

His easy elegance lent a surface sheen to the opening, but by the closing bars of the cadenza, played with an arresting hollow tone, he had found a still centre, sustained and intensified through the slow movement. Richard Stamp's conception of the concerto appeared to be epic, if the elaborate gestures were anything to go by; yet it was

Küchl who dignified the occasion with his own instinctive leadership.

Schubert's Mass in E flat, from the final year of his life, is coming in from the critical cold at last. While the opening *Kyrie* may sound as consoling as Mendelssohn, the composer's unconventional handling of the *Credo*, the pregnant

chromaticism of the fugues and the baleful *Agnus Dei* with which it ends, undeniably, make for a deeply personal statement.

The Vienna Singverein created a well-rounded, unfocused sound with wonderfully deep open vowels, and the two tenors, Jamie McDougall and Ivan Sharpe, and soprano Cornelia Hosp were well blended in a tender *Et incarnatus est*.

Stamp made the most of the *Sanctus* with its audacious melody rising in the major and falling through two minor keys. He was helped by four fine trombonists, whose parts give the impetus and foundation to the whole work. They led the fateful *Agnus Dei* climax with grand resonance.

HELEN WALLACE

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CABARET: Clive Davis on a belting Ruthie Henshall at the Festival Hall

Purr and stir

BACK in the early days of the space race *Private Eye* ran a cover mischievously proclaiming Britain's entry into the fray. Underneath the bold headline lurked a silhouette of the Albert Memorial, looking every inch a string-and-Sellotape Saturn V rocket.

The moral of the story is that some things are best left to gung-ho Americans. Ruthie Henshall, rightly acclaimed as one of the bright hopes of the West End musical, invited similar comparisons in the first half of her concert.

It takes a certain self-confidence, not to say recklessness, to begin a performance by competing with Ethel Merman on *Everything's Coming Up Roses* or by evoking mem-

ories of Judy Garland on *The Man That Got Away*. Henshall does not — yet — belong in their company, and we were left with the spectacle of a personable but uncharismatic singer straining for the big climaxes above the massed ranks of the BBC Concert Orchestra.

The Rose, a hit for Bette Midler, opened more promisingly, with simple piano accompaniment. But once the rest of the band entered, Henshall again sounded more shrill than impassioned. Her treatment seemed all the more

derivative given that the song's composer, Amanda McBroom, had delivered a magnificent rendition in London a few weeks ago.

The desultory repertoire and the tacky introduction of two male dancers did little to improve the show's awkward pacing. Nor did a perfunctory, post-interval gallop through *Rhapsody in Blue* by the Australian pianist Bernard Waltz, who deserved better.

Yet Henshall herself was transformed in the second half, finally playing to her strengths as an actress and

breathing character into the melodies rather than just belting them out. The greater emphasis on more contemporary material helped. *Memory* and the *Les Mis* anthem *I Dreamed A Dream* working well in this context.

On *Working* the sultry doubles entendres of a vamp-like railway platform announcer provided an outlet for her polished comedy skills. Lionel Barr's *Where is Love* found her at her most tender and vulnerable. By the time she reached the closing sivers of Garshwin, in *Someone To Watch Over Me* and *But Not For Me*, she was no longer the wannabe star, more the five-star actress. The voice by now was purring, not shouting.

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Continental football idols — Eric, Ruud, Gianfranco and Jürgen — have swept British xenophobia off the field, says Simon Barnes

How Cantona & co beat Alf Garnett

Point one: sport is trivial. That is why people like it so much. Point two: nothing that people truly care about can be altogether trivial. In fact, if all the politicians who have been banging the drum about Europe had taken the trouble to read the sports pages, they would not now be naked to their enemies. Perhaps even the politicians most deeply committed to Britain — to this sceptred isle, ruler of the waves, the land splendidly isolated, from Alfred the Great to Alf Garnett — might have had cause to think again had they read with proper seriousness the trivial news that gaudied the newspapers of the nation this week.

Cantona: a nation mourned! Au revoir, Eric! This newspaper carried the story of Cantona's retirement from football on the front page, page three, and on the front of the sports section. Why so lavish? The principle was that, as *The Sun* itself acknowledged, Cantona was bigger news even than Gazza.

Gazza, or Paul Gascoigne, lest it should have escaped any politician's attention, is an Englishman

who plays football. Cantona, however, is French — and, until his retirement, his was the biggest name in English football.

Football is seen as the abode of unreconstructed xenophobes. Little Englanders. They hate all black people, naturally. And they hate all foreigners, especially Frags, Krauts and Wops. They never vote Labour, because Labour is the party that likes blacks and will bring us Brits far too close to that terrible garlicky enclave known as Europe.

Now to hold in one's head a large number of contradictory notions is the prescriptive right of every human being. But logic has a way of wearing down the most obvious of these cherished bits of nonsense. It is impossible to hate all Frenchmen and love Cantona. For Cantona was not, and never looked like becoming, an honorary Englishman, a Henry James, a T. S. Eliot. Cantona is quintessentially

Frog. He never did get to speak much English. His talent was to be exceptional. He needed colleagues to be different from that is why he fulfilled his talent in England, rather than France.

Thus Manchester United supporters took Cantona to their bosom as a card-carrying exotic, and they celebrated his exoticism by singing his praises to the tune of the *Marseillaise*. Eric Cantona's Frenchness was not incidental to his popularity: it was central.

There is no Euroscepticism in modern English football. If anything, football is in the grip of rampant Eurocredulity. A week ago, Chelsea won the FA Cup Final. The opening goal was scored by Roberto di Matteo, who is Italian. The second goal was set up with the jolliest little back-head from Gianfranco Zola, another Italian. Zola had just been voted in as the official football writers' Player of

the Year. Italians were once seen in England as the great villains of football: a bunch of devious, Machiavellian assassins, as vicious as they were dishonest. But Zola, of Chelsea and Italy, Zola who scored for his country the goal that may yet keep England out of World Cup finals, is an English national hero. This Zola is no *bête humaine*.

Overseas footballers have won the Player of the Year award for the past three seasons. Cantona got it the previous year, and before that it went to Jürgen Klinsmann. Klinsmann is a German who arrived to play for Tottenham Hotspur with a reputation for conning referees by diving — that is, flinging himself to the floor as if mortally wounded at every opportunity. He was a national hate figure, an arch-enemy. He celebrated his first goal for his English club by diving headlong at the turf, gleefully mocking his own

mockers. And he left a year later as an English national love-object. Europeans now manage leading English clubs. "Yeah, well, you know, early, doors, right?" says Ruud Gullit, manager of Chelsea, who is not only Dutch, but dreadlocked and black. Despite his fondness for England and its footballing clichés, he remains one of the best managerial talkers on the game. Arsenal are managed by the not inappropriately named Frenchman, Arsène Wenger, a man with rimless spectacles who at press conferences assumes the air of a university lecturer addressing a particularly dim bunch of undergrads. Both men have had a very reasonable amount of success in their first seasons: therefore both are liked. Gullit is a man very greatly loved, and not only by men: women find him bright, not boorish; masculine, not macho. One of the points of sport is that it is quantifiable. You can deny that

Marcel Proust had any talent as a novelist whatsoever; but you cannot argue with the proposition that in the 1995-96 football season, Cantona scored 19 goals and that his team won the league championship and the FA Cup. The position that all Frags are useless gits is basically unrefutable.

Eurosceptics believe that little Englanders want nothing to do with Europe, and that the little Englanders' heartland is on the terraces of the great football clubs. But this is not the case. For a start, there are no terraces in the top division any more; the game is played in all-seater stadiums. And every Premiership club and its (seated) supporters will talk forever about their principal ambition. We want to get into Europe. We've dropped a couple of home games, people say — but we can still get into Europe. It is the

measure of success and failure. Getting into Europe means playing in one of the three competitions for European clubs. Qualification for these competitions comes from success in the three principal domestic competitions. How far have Manchester United come? They have dominated the domestic game, but the consensus is that they cannot be numbered among the truly great sides until they win something "in Europe".

Love of Europe is traditionally seen as a vaguely liberal, vaguely middle-class, vaguely intellectual sort of thing: the French, well, so civilised. *Toujours Provence* and my dear, what's the English for *cafénière*? But it is in football that Europe actually matters to people. Cantona says: "Le foot a toujours déchaîné les passions." Football, that is, has always unleashed great passions. Another philosopher — Voltaire — once wrote: "Ecrasez l'infamie." Which, roughly translated, means: "Stamp out prejudice." Thank you, Eric, Ruud, Gianfranco and Jürgen: you have banished Alf Garnett from football forever.

Morals of the postal code

Crash is possibly the worst film even duty has ever made me watch: the *Oh Calcutta!* of the used-car lot

Every article on this page is censored. Four-letter words are banned. No offence may be given to notoriously sensitive groups such as... I dare not even mention names. Editorial codes, editorial oversight, common decency, the law and a sense of self-protection fence the writer in on all sides. The wonder is that anything is printed.

So what is so special about Westminster City Council, which this week refused to license the showing of David Cronenberg's film *Crash* in West End cinemas? It may have under its aegis some of London's most lurid malls of depravity. But a film entirely dedicated to the eroticism of car crashes was too much for even the most case-hardened councillor. The

Truffaut. "You don't make a movie, the movie makes you," said Godard. To Cocteau, film was "death in action... a petrified fountain of thought." To Orson Welles it was "a ribbon of dreams". There is no end to the drivel you get when you ask a profession to describe the significance of its work.

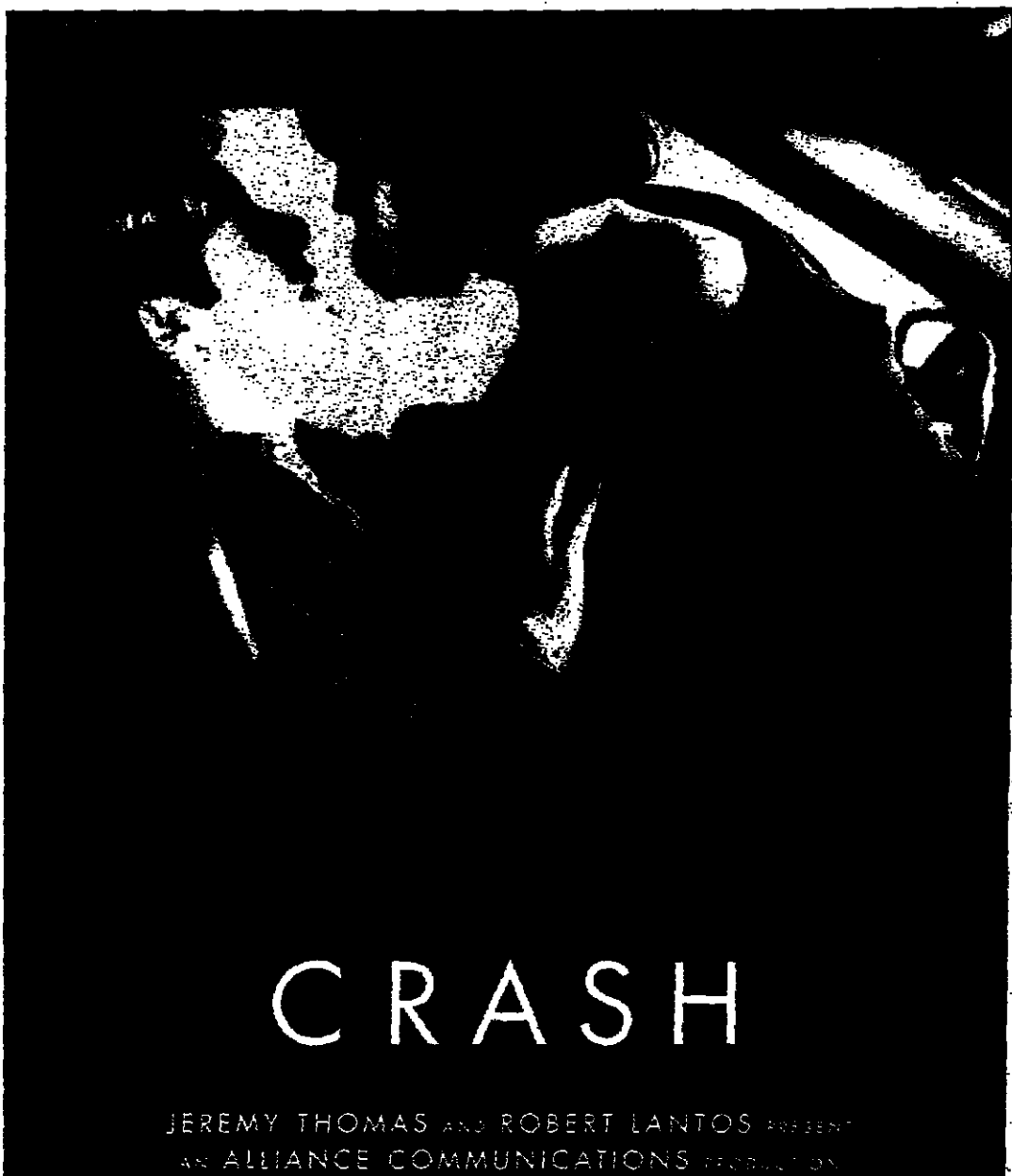
Thus any cuts to *Crash*, said the producer Chris Auty, would damage the integrity of his "warning against dehumanisation, against a society drifting into affectlessness". This is allegedly a film about "the reshaping of the human body by modern technology". It sees car crashes as sexually liberating, as "a fertilising rather than a destructive event". What a flexible friend is the English language.

The issue is not the movie, but its capacity to incite imitation. Suppose I had made a film not about mechanically challenged cars but about socially challenged people. I am sure I could persuade actors to portray people getting

sexual thrills from racial violence. They would have erotic experiences mugging ethnic minorities and taking part in Klan rituals. They could be shown dismembering disabled people and doing disgusting things to AIDS victims. I would dismiss all protest on the grounds that this was art and that art must be free. I would add the film-maker's mantra: that a good film is a statement: it can do no harm.

Were I to make such a film, discrimination and harassment laws would be invoked against me. No defender of artistic freedom would rush to my defence. Yet the film industry pleads a double standard. Advertisement films are promoted as effective sellers of products and services. Films depicting violence or sexual degradation are somehow "effective", ribbons of dreams, mere escapism. A film can sell, set role models, even tell a moral tale: mysteriously it cannot tell an immoral one. Provided a film is produced by the trade union of serious film-makers, it is art and therefore benign. Any evil thoughts and images must be for the public good.

This is the talk of sophists down the ages. The directors, actors and cameramen who made *Crash* may claim they were involved in a deeply moral artistic experience. So be it. They may wish to share this experience with the public, to its entertainment and their profit. This is a free country and London is a private enterprise city. Cinemas are semi-private places and what can-



Never in Westminster: to see *Crash*, sado-masochistic West Enders must now go elsewhere

senting adults do in them is normally their own business. These are arguments. But so too are those presented by Westminster City Council.

The council believes that there is such a thing as imitative crime, that films can induce bad behaviour. It points out that an 18 certificate does not deny young people access to this film — as any London parent knows. Councillors judge the film depraved and see it as an incitement to seek sexual pleasure from crashing cars on city streets. London police have enough trouble without this added menace. Local regulators have elected accountability. They have licensing powers, and are not having this film on their patch. That is what their voters would want.

Had I been a Westminster councillor I would have been sorely tempted to ban *Crash*. It blatantly celebrates gratuitous violence. As the crime Alexander Walker wrote in the *London Evening Standard*, this kind of film-making becomes a "hermetic experience" on closed

sets. Nobody involved ever says enough is enough. But bad films make bad censorship debates. The onus of proof should always be on the censor, whether a work is pornography or art. Censoring films is nowadays a near fruitless enterprise, given their availability on video. I would not have graced *Crash* with a ban. It is not worth the hassle or the publicity of the hassle.

Yet I would expect a local ban on flagrantly racist material, in neighbourhoods where it would be offensive and inflammatory. Films must have differing impacts in different places. Local option in censorship is appropriate to local democracy. It is preferable to respond to local feeling and calls in the law. That is why the true friends of the censor are those who pretend that bad taste does not matter, who claim a licence to offend and demand that every mark be overstepped.

Local option is subsidiary democracy at work. For years, many Welsh counties refused to permit Sunday drinking. Such freedom should be extended to Sunday trading, noise abatement, gambling and the control of animals. Local discretion does not mean the dismantling of the kingdom. Already Westminster is inviting outraged citizens to telephone complaints about other offensive films, doubtless to the glee of voters. If that is what the citizens of Westminster want, who are we to deny it them?

We are all censored. Censorship polices the border between public taste and licence. Like all policemen, it should be invoked only in emergencies. In most forms of artistic expression, the test to interfere is most shrill when self-discipline has broken down. The same is true of journalistic intrusion. The public has enough and calls in the law. That is why the true friends of the censor are those who pretend that bad taste does not matter, who claim a licence to offend and demand that every mark be overstepped.

Let in daylight on the magic of art

Electric illumination of paintings is barbaric, says Avigdor Arikha

Art lovers are betrayed, and the general public misled, by the use in most museums and galleries of artificial light. One might not know that it falsifies chromatic values and hence impairs our vision of colour. But even an amateur who, having seen a painting in natural light, sees it again in artificial light, is bound to experience something akin to drinking a great wine that has been corked. The consequences suffered by the slightest art lover are far worse, however, than the frustrations of the disappointed drinker. Indeed, the absence of daylight from museums places their very purpose in jeopardy.

Natural light has been suppressed almost everywhere, and replaced with artificial light, quite in opposition to the conditions necessary for what one might call proper vision. Artificial light is seen as an improvement, though it is in fact a regression from the marvellous conditions in which one could see paintings up to 30 years ago.

London's National Gallery, especially — and notoriously — the Sainsbury Wing, with its temporary exhibitions bunker, the Royal Academy, which has covered its marvellous skylights; the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in New York; the Uffizi in Florence; the museums and galleries of Paris, Rome and Madrid: all have been affected by the dogmatic belief in the virtues of artificial light.

There are social and economic reasons for its use, of course; without it museums would have to shut at sundown and would never have late-opening days. At least as important, though, is the fashionable notion that electric light, because it is adjustable and constant, is the best possible means for the exhibition of pictures.

According to another widely accepted belief, natural light alters pigments, because of the ultraviolet (UV) rays emitted by the sun. However, it is organic pigments that are vulnerable to UV rays, not inorganic ones — those that generally constitute a painter's palette. Moreover, tungsten, halogen and neon also emit ultraviolet rays. But natural light can be directed and filtered, to block out the UV rays. The old studio practice of whitened windows, with a thinly sprayed layer of white water-based titanium dioxide, is the best and cheapest solution for accurate vision and optimal protection.

Architects and engineers are often among those who believe that intense artificial light affords better vision than daylight. The opposite, however, is the case: chromatic perception is precise only in natural, preferably moderate light. Unfamiliar nuances of tone are visible under such a light that

cannot be perceived otherwise, because the lesser intensity of natural light stimulates the eye's tonal receptors, while an intense luminance inhibits them.

Vision under artificial light is affected by a static and shortened colour spectrum, which reduces the chromatic wavelengths available. The colours seen under such conditions are recognised mnemonically, through an operation called "colour constancy". But tone — chromatic hues and saturation — is suppressed under artificial light. Thus chromatic values are distorted.

Recall, for instance, what it is like to walk out of a shop saturated in electric light with a newly purchased half-tone jacket: you will find that its colour does not match the one you chose in the shop. This happens because colour constancy does not work for total vision. This is the point: painters have always been in search of the right tone. All painters — from Titian to Mondrian — are those betrayed when shown in artificial light.

Light, then, is to museums what acoustics are to concert halls: it must be right. Imagine a concert hall in which the tonal range were truncated: there would be a public outcry. When it comes to visual matters, though, the public remains remarkably ingenuous, and attuned to department-store lighting. The emotional impact of visual experience, and thus of qualitative discernment, depends on accurate conditions of perception.

The fate of our artistic heritage and our visual culture lies in the hands of architects, lighting engineers, curators and above all museum directors. But their main concern is not to ensure that paintings be seen properly, but rather to satisfy an ever-growing, uninformed lay public. This public does not know that the addition of artificial to natural light inhibits tone and colour saturation, and annihilates the equalisation of simultaneous chromatic contrast — the chromatic effect produced by the juxtaposition of one colour next to the other — that is the pivot of painting.

What remains of painting in artificial light is only its image — it is as if one took away from a wine its bouquet, to keep only the liquid. Deprived of natural light in public museums as well as commercial galleries, an entire generation has grown up without being able to see paintings in the right conditions. They are thus incapable of discerning, or ultimately of recognising, the pictorial subtleties that enable us to judge a picture's quality.

The distinguished Israeli artist Avigdor Arikha lives in Paris. Books on his work include *Arikha* by Samuel Beckett, *Robert Rauschenberg* (Thames & Hudson) and *Arikha* by Duncan Thomson (Phaidon). His own writings on art history include *On Depiction* (Bellevue).

A flat rate

FRANK DOBSON, the barrel-shaped Secretary of State for Health, appears to be the first Cabinet minister in memory to be a council flat tenant. Mischievous sorts in Westminster are suggesting that Dobson, with his elevated

status, should no longer be entitled to the flat in a mansion block opposite the British Museum.

With his MPs and his ministerial salary, Dobson's income must be nothing like £100,000 per year. He has a second home in Yorkshire and is



Frank Dobson and the fancy block of council flats

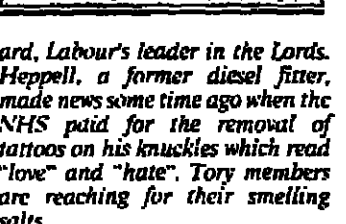
a pillar of the new Establishment — hardly the sort to need help with his housing by Camden council.

But for many years, he has lived at Great Russell Mansions, which he lists as his address in *Who's Who*. For some time he was a private tenant, but then Camden bought the mansion block and he became a council tenant.

"It's never been a secret," he said yesterday of the flat which must be worth at least £250,000 and for which sources suggest he pays just £150 a week.

Camden yesterday admitted that its tenants benefited from low rents. "Council tenants all pay different rates according to the size of the flat," says an expert. "But council rents are always a lot less than those in the private sector."

By way of explanation, to those hard-pressed nurses who might quibble at subsidised housing for the health minister, Dobson says: "I do not get any mortgage tax relief."



ard, Labour's leader in the Lords. Heppell, a former diesel fitter, made news some time ago when the NHS paid for the removal of tattoos on his knuckles which read "love" and "hate". Tory members are reaching for their smelling salts.

A MILESTONE will be reached on Tuesday next week when, despite all the odds, Soho's greatest drinker Jeffrey Bernard becomes an old age pensioner. He is no longer his former spritely self, and he says lugubriously that he knows of no party being planned for him.



"Let's hope it can stay up there"

True love

A REASSURINGLY passionate performance can be expected in a new tape version of *Romeo and Juliet*. The two principals, Kate Beckinsale and Michael Sheen, are stepping out together and are currently looking for a home together in west London.

This is Kate's second stab at Shakespeare — she shot to fame in Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing* soon after leaving Oxford. But the 22-year-old daughter of the late Porridge star Richard Beckinsale enjoyed herself. "Especially as we are already so close," Sheen has now moved on to another fictional lover — as Oscar Wilde's boyfriend in a new film.

Could Max Hastings, fly-fishing Editor of London's *Evening Standard*, have been ghost-writing for the paper's proprietor Lord



Rothermere, who has switched to the Labour benches in the House of Lords? In a piece in yesterday's paper under Lord Rothermere's name explaining why he changed sides, the description of the Tory party is pure Mac: "a magnificent salmon that spans the next generation and drifts spent and ruined back to sea."



IN TRINITY

He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him

Tomorrow, Trinity Sunday, is unique among Christian festivals in that it celebrates neither a person nor an event, but the mystery of God. It is, if you like, pure white light into which the colours of the spectrum are gathered. As a feast of the Church it dates only from the mid-14th century, but it quickly came to enjoy a particular popularity in England. In the Book of Common Prayer the Sundays following it were named "after Trinity" — though a better title would be "in Trinity", reminding worshippers that this feast is not about abstract doctrine but about a divine life shared by grace.

In the world of theology one of the more remarkable features of the last 20 years has been a renewed concern for the implications of the doctrine of God as Trinity. If Marx, Freud and Nietzsche rejected God, the God they rejected was in many ways one framed in the image of abstract reason of Platonism combined with a monarchical imperialism. The distant God of 18th-century Deism, and the inscrutable God of predestinarian Calvinism alike imprinted a pattern on the Western understanding of God, which had little place for God as Trinity.

And if by reaction from such a remote God, the immanence of God in the world was stressed, then God could be telescoped into the world without remainder. As Coleridge perceptively put it, "Pantheism is but a painted atheism — and the doctrine of the Trinity the only sure and certain bulwark against it." And why? Because God as Trinity is a God of grace, a God who saves, the Lord and Giver of life.

That human projections inevitably shape our image of God, we recognise as true, but so is the converse. Our image of God shapes our understanding of what it is to be human. All too often in the West the person has been identified with the individual with adverse

consequence. Persons are related by definition, individuals are not. Atomised individualism — and an equally destructive collectivism as its polar opposite — have characterised much Western thinking. Both flow from the distorted doctrine of God, what some have described as the pathology of Western Christianity, a failure to take Trinitarian theology seriously.

At the heart of the doctrine of God as Trinity, is the conviction that God is a communion of persons. The great 4th-century Greek theologians we know as the Cappadocian Fathers spoke of that communion as *perichoresis*, a divine round-dance of mutually indwelling love. They used such language, not out of a desire for complexity or abstraction, let alone the framing of a mathematical conundrum, but as a consequence of wrestling with what God must be if He had revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, and whose grace was known as His self-giving and transforming love.

The Trinity is what we mean when we say that God is love. That communion of love is the clue to our identity as those made in the image of God. As Charles Williams perceptively observed, it is as important to learn how we live from each other as how we are to live for each other — and that is true politically as well as personally.

Trinity Sunday summons us to discover our true identity as persons in relationship, made in the image of the God of love. And we can only do that when, like Margaret Clitheroe in Gerald Manley Hopkins' poem, we catch "the crying of those Three, the Immortals of the Eternal Ring, Utterer, Uttered, Uttering," and find that the God who is the source and goal of our being is grace and communion, and know that, in Trinitarian words, "It is the glory of His high estate. He is an act that doth communicate."

CRAWLING OFF THE CANVASS

Policy not presentation is the problem for the Tories

Three weeks after their disastrous defeat at the hands of Tony Blair and new Labour, the parliamentary Conservative Party has finally shown the first small signs of emerging from the curious state of both denial and despair that has been dominant since John Major was ejected from Downing Street. In the absence of organised opposition from the Tories, the new Government has stood astride British politics.

There are very legitimate reasons for the Tories to conduct a wide-ranging examination of their internal affairs, party constitution, and method of selecting the leader. However, to have postponed the present battle to some later date and resorted to an interim arrangement would have been profoundly unwise. It would only have prolonged the agony of indecision. An impotent opposition would not have been in the best interests of party or country.

The six candidates for the Conservative leadership now know the rules by which the contest will be conducted. The money war is over and the real clash of ideas should begin. With some noble exceptions, ideas have been a rather undervalued commodity in the race so far. Instead, matters have centered on personalities and a rather unimpressive search for the mantle of "electability". Several aspirants have stressed the importance of instant mass public appeal in explaining the triumph of Tony Blair and implied that they alone can imitate it.

That is to misread much about the new Prime Minister's success. Mr Blair was not "electable" because he was a pretty face and smooth talker. He reaped his reward because he has stood for certain principles and taken real risks in the transformation of his own party. He has been willing to undertake a fundamental reevaluation of policy positions, many long-held and long-cherished, and then act. In short, policy renewal and bold leadership explain why Labour won with a 179-seat majority.

OFF OUR TROLRIES

Supermarkets know a thing or two about the way we wheel

Grabbing the groceries will never be the same again. Tesco have launched their new high-tech shopping trolley. Designed in deep secrecy, during an offensive known as "Operation Sparkle", the supermarket superpower have spent \$4 million in pursuit of the perfect vehicle — one that will actually travel in the direction it is pushed. Twelve months of intensive research has apparently paid off. If the reviews are to be believed, the new design will end the well-known steering problems that made the average shopping trip a close cousin to a day on the dogdams.

Some people, of course, will wonder whether the effort has been worth the investment. After all, supermarket trolleys can be discovered in the most extraordinary places: carparks, rivers, towerblocks, on top of mountains, almost anywhere except the immediate surroundings of a supermarket. Others will wonder how, even if the sleek new vehicles can be kept on site, it can possibly make commercial sense for Tesco to put so much time and effort into what is, after all, only a shopping accessory.

That would be to misunderstand the nature of the creature. The cunning chaps at Tesco know that a trolley is far more than a device for transporting goods, it determines the character of the purchases themselves. Supermarket shopping is measured, psychologically, in the proportions of a trolley.

A full load is indication of a decent effort. A few items languishing at the bottom of a vast receptacle is cause for much embarrassment at the checkout line. This might explain why supermarkets have slowly increased the capacity of the average consumer chariot by four-fold in the last four decades.

Few can resist peering into other customers' trolleys while waiting in line. All sorts of judgments are instantly made about the income, lifestyle, and personality of a stranger on that basis. A supermarket subculture of snoopiness exists whereby you are what you buy, or rather, what you are seen to have bought. Our vanity is exploited by the grocery giants. How long before the double-decker or stretch-limo trolley is introduced so that we can really show off at our expense and their profit?

A few brave souls resist the trend. Plucking up enormous courage, they either abandon all artificial assistance in favour of their bare hands or take the humble basket. The sneaky supermarkets have a ready response for such rebels. In the first case, a small army of security guards are deployed to issue accusations of shopkeeping. In the second, decades of conspicuous refusal to modernise the item have made the basket a beast of burden. Every way we turn (more efficiently now) the Tesco troops have us covered. We must be off our trolleys.

Winners and losers under Labour's windfall tax

From Mr Ian Taylor, MP for Esher and Walton (Conservative)

Sir, As Simon Jenkins clearly implies today ("Monopoly game over"), Sir Iain Vallance, Chairman of BT, can hardly say he was not warned that his company was among those targeted for the proposed windfall tax. As long ago as 1995, as Minister for Technology, I suggested to him that cuddly deals between BT and the Labour Party would end in tears.

Behaving like a utility results in being treated as one. By offering BT release from the only restriction placed upon it (no simultaneous broadcasting of BBC, ITV, etc., to homes on its existing network before 2001), Labour paid no attention to the risk to the cable industry's expanding telephone services.

In return for potential increased market dominance, BT only promised connections to schools, which it and its rivals are already carrying out.

Yet BT is still right to complain about the windfall tax. If the Government wants to apply a retrospective levy on BT, why not on its 150 or so competitors? Is the allegation that Ofcom's regulations have been too generous to BT? If so, it is a claim that BT's millions of shareholders would not accept, while customers must be puzzled about receiving a cut in call costs of 40 per cent or more in real terms.

Does it make sense to hit BT when it has already launched its network upgrade in response to competition? And why penalise BT now when it is taking advantage of telecoms liberalisation in the EU and internationally with extensive joint ventures?

For BT, it does not always pay to talk.

Yours faithfully,
IAN TAYLOR,
Member of Parliament,
House of Commons.
May 21.

From Mr Andrew Boff

Sir, Simon Jenkins's defence of the Government's windfall tax recognises the PR strings that the Labour Party pulled when selling the idea. The idea of taxing the fat cats and the ones who made a quick profit from the sale of shares in the utilities is one which the public felt would be a good idea.

It is, of course, nonsense that these terrible criminals (we all know the type: investors, successful managers, etc.) will be caught by the tax. They have already sold their shares, already been paid their bonuses. The people who will suffer as a result of the windfall tax are the customers of the utilities (ie, just about everybody) who will see their bills rise, current shareholders and the majority of the 23 million people who have pension funds invested in the utilities.

The fat cats will not be touched. Presentation is everything.

Yours,
ANDREW BOFF,
9 Queensbridge Road, E2,
May 21.

From Mrs Judith Robinson

Sir, As your City Editor hints (Commentary, May 16), if the Chancellor wants to levy a windfall tax he need look no further than the windfall which the building society and insurance company demutualisations are bestowing upon a large part of the population.

The beneficiaries are effectively getting something for nothing, so to tax it could hardly be deemed unfair. A tax on the value of shares allocated, at the basic rate of income tax, could generate up to £5 billion, depending on whether or not it was levied retrospectively and it would reduce the inflationary pressure of the share distributions.

It would also be fairly easy to collect — the registrars could provide the names and addresses of everyone receiving the shares and the number of

shares granted — and a fair value could be ascribed based on the price given to those who elect to sell at the opening auction.

Such a tax would no doubt be unpopular, hitting so many people so directly. A levy on utilities is seen as more acceptable, because many people do not recognise that the Chancellor will thereby plunder their pensions and equity savings (such as life policies and unit trusts); the illusion is that someone else will pay.

Is this an opportunity for the Chancellor to show that he can be honest on this score?

Yours faithfully,
J. A. ROBINSON,
Cobdown,
Copt Hall Road, Ighiteam, Kent.
May 22.

From Mr S. D. Gander

Sir, As a British Telecom shareholder, I support the objectives of the Blair Government because I consider the use of the windfall tax as absolutely necessary.

The privatised industries should be proud to be the instruments of good. There are many injured people in Britain's economy and going to their rescue is honourable and human.

The utilities and other industries took the gifts offered by the previous government and found they were able to make hay aplenty. They will, by dint of shrewd management and opportunism, be able to go on making yet greater stacks, although some of their workers, made redundant, have less cause to smile.

We must do our best for our youthful workless ones and cut out the cancer of welfare dependency — so come on lads, be ready to give the Government (chosen by the people) a hand.

Yours faithfully,
S. D. GANDER,
14 Kettle Lawns,
Fairford, Gloucestershire.

Moves to save Oxford's Bacon

From Mr Reginald Alton

Sir, No one can fault the taste and artistic acumen of the undergraduates of Pembroke College, Oxford, in the decade after the end of the Second World War.

Not only did they purchase a Bacon painting in 1953 (report and photograph, May 16) but their subscription and loan scheme was the model and inspiration for many other colleges. Nor can we doubt their generosity and community spirit in 1991, when they solved the problem of security by lending the Bacon to the Ashmolean Museum where it could be seen and valued by all citizens of Oxford as well as by members of the university.

However, the sale — originally proposed in order to mitigate a likely rise in college charges — will inevitably be interpreted by the public as yet another example of Oxford University's embracing a culture of self-interest rather than of the public good.

No amount of talk about bursaries for poor students of the fine arts will disguise the impression that, for gain, the present-day undergraduates of Pembroke College are about to deprive the city, the university and themselves of access to an important work of art whose purchase exemplified the cultural aspirations of a generation emerging from war.

Is it too late to hope that some resource may be found to keep the painting in the Ashmolean?

Yours faithfully,
R. G. ALTON,
St Edmund Hall, Oxford.
May 17.

From Mr P. R. Mills

Sir, I was secretary of the Junior Common Room at Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1947 when the "kitty" scheme for buying paintings was initiated, by a huge majority, under the inspiration of one Tony Emery who had access to Sir Kenneth Clark. Tony was an enthusiast for contemporary British paintings and persuaded Clark to select the first half dozen for us.

Over the years the collection has had no easy ride. Some years ago a heathen generation of undergraduates threw out the paintings and they were relegated to a cellar to rot.

However, a few years ago they were rescued by a more enlightened generation and a selection was beautifully exhibited during Eights Week.

By this time the collection had come again to the notice of the Senior Common Room, at a time when the college was in dire financial straits. There was a suggestion that the collection should be sold for the benefit of the development fund, but this was scotched by Sir Frank Cooper, my contemporary and by then an honorary fellow, who convinced the SCR that the paintings belonged to the undergraduates.

Needless to say the eminent legal eagles from amongst us have been concerned with the legal rights of ownership by a shifting population (ie, of undergraduates).

But, with the forthcoming auction of the Francis Bacon, all, by the grace of God, appears now to have been resolved.

I am, Sir, your obedient
P. R. MILLS,
The Old School,
Hoghill Street, Beaminster, Dorset.
May 17.

Proms under fire

From the President of the United Kingdom Sibelius Society

Sir, I read Mr David Green's letter (May 17) with considerable sympathy. Although I have a natural corner to fight (and it has been a long, hard fight over 35 years) I am, too, appalled at the neglect of British music in general and specific composers in particular in this year's season of Proms.

Sir Michael Tippett, whom I regard as the greatest composer of his generation and who, of course, is still happily among us, is represented by one work. The eclipse of Walton's wonderful music is scandalous in a festival of music in Britain.

We have mainstream 20th-century composers whose music is often better appreciated in America and Australia than in their home country. Delius knew all about this perverse artistic thinking and had many quotable things to say about it. It does seem as if nothing has changed since the early years of this century and although Sibelius is happily rehabilitated this year, pride in my British heritage is offended.

Yours sincerely,
EDWARD W. CLARK,
President, UK Sibelius Society,
5 Fitzwilliam Road, SW4,
May 19.

Sporting chance

From Mr Brendan Hugh Powell

Sir, You report (news in brief, May 14) that a Bradford pub is to stage an annual cricket match to determine which team shall hold the urn bearing the ashes of one of its former patrons. Could the England team not be invited to compete, perhaps in a three cornered competition, so that they might have a reasonable prospect of winning the ashes from time to time?

Yours sincerely,
B. H. POWELL,
46 Rooks Avenue,
Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire.

Libby Purves intervenes in debate on hunting

From the Chairman of the League Against Cruel Sports

Sir, Each of Libby Purves's arguments for the retention of hunting with hounds ("Wrong scent, Mr Blair", May 20) has been tried, tested and discredited.

The Labour Government, which has at its heart the development of a moral, caring, compassionate society, instinctively rejects any activity which results in the needless and gratuitous carnage that is the hallmark of the hunt.

I find Ms Purves's approval of "blooding", the daubing of blood on a child's face after an animal has been mutilated by hounds, quite staggering. Given the possible psychological effects upon the child of this experience, I hope that the Government will abolish the medieval practice of the hunt as soon as effectively possible.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN COOPER,
Chairman,
League Against Cruel Sports,
Sparling House,
83-87 Union Street, SE1,
May 20.

From Mr Denis White

Sir, Libby Purves is right to question the motives of the hunt abolitionists. Here in the West Country our glorious herds of red deer on Exmoor and the Quantocks are facing the threat of extinction thanks to ill-informed and insensitive anti-hunt campaigning.

Yours faithfully,
HERMANN ARNDT,
Castlehay, Woodbury, Devon.
May 21.

From Mr Derrick Smith

Sir, Libby Purves is to be congratulated on producing one of the most intelligent and far-sighted pieces of the current debate on hunting with hounds.

In his *History of Cockfighting*, published in the 1970s, George Ryley Scott

noted that the concept of cruelty presents numerous inconsistencies and anomalies. In many instances the most vigorous denunciations of one form of cruelty applaud some other form of cruelty. It always was so. It probably always will be so.

It is interesting that, whilst taking the high moral ground against hunting with hounds, new Labour appears to support game shooting. Elliott Morley, now Minister for the Countryside, stated in a radio debate last February that he saw no problem with letting or "lamping" for wild animals at night.

With such duality of principle being clearly evident in this debate, perhaps the wisest approach is for all sides to show some tolerance. This is precisely the quality that Tony Blair espoused after his election victory. Is new Labour really saying that the minority who hunt with hounds have no place in a multi-racial, multi-cultural Britain?

Libby Purves is right. Hunting as we know it is probably doomed anyway. But it will die due to the lack of space caused by growing urbanisation. Labour should refrain from hastening the end of this piece of cultural identity by using the statute book — this would mark them as increasingly authoritarian.

Yours faithfully,
DERICK SMITH,
Upnary Barn,
Ardeley, Hertfordshire.
May 20.

From Mr David Lockwood

Sir, My best wishes to Michael Foale on his mission to repair the Russian Mir space station in addition to conducting scientific experiments (report, May 16).

However, I hope he realises the weight of tradition he bears on his shoulders as a British handman. On examining the problem, he should scratch his head and say: "I don't like the look of that. You're going to need a new one. It's going to cost you."

He should then disappear for a fortnight, return with the wrong parts and tools, and then retire for a prolonged tea-break.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN F. WHITE,
St James Vicarage,
3 Church Lane,
Chapelthorpe,
Wakefield, West Yorkshire.
May 22.

These herds are protected and preserved as the result of the deer management programmes of committed local people. Banning the hunts will lead to indiscriminate shooting of deer and ultimately their total elimination. What a sad legacy to pass to future generations.

Our new Government should not be hijacked by sentimentalists but should listen to the legitimate and compassionate views of country people.

Yours etc,
DENYS WHITE,
Higher Terhill,
Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset.

From Mr Hermann Arndt

Sir, Libby Purves states that fox hunting is a "pastime that amuses hundreds and employs thousands". She might have mentioned that this "sport" disgusts hundreds of thousands and that includes many of us who live in the countryside.

Yours sincerely,
HERMANN ARNDT,
Castlehay, Woodbury, Devon.
May 21.

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Yours faithfully,
DERICK SMITH,
Upnary Barn,
Ardeley, Hertfordshire.
May 20.

From Mr David Lockwood

Sir, A capitalist, democratic Russia, being weak, can be pressurised into accepting an eastward expansion of the West, eg, of Nato (report, May 15), as I have stated since June 1991 and explained in *Russia and World War III* (Krzenwicz, 1993); but her consequent fear and humiliation may give rise to a neocommunist dictatorship there, just as Weimar Germany's failure gave rise to Hitler. Russia is not entirely finished.

Yours faithfully,
MAREK LASKIEWICZ,
39 Queen Elizabeth's Walk, N16,
May 15.

Author's view

From Mr David Lockwood

Sir, Lady Antonia Fraser is too trusting (letter, May 19; see also letter, May 20). The conditions attached to an *ex gratia* payment to public libraries for books must exclude videotapes, music CDs, CD-Roms and Internet hardware and software if there is to be any possibility that it will be spent in the wholly desirable manner she suggests. Librarians are jackdaws.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID LOCKWOOD,
11 Dale Street,
Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.
May 20.

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Letters to the Editor should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — 0171-782 5046.

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BUSINESS EDITOR: Patience Wheatcroft

SATURDAY MAY 24 1997

Ministers press for higher
windfall tax target

Soaring utility profits to hit £10bn

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

PRIVATISED utility companies will next week report soaring profits that will be seized on by the Government as justification for the planned windfall tax.

In total the privatised utilities, including regional companies that have been taken over, are expected to deliver profits of more than £6.7 billion. If BT's record profits of £3.2 billion are added, the profits touch £9.9 billion.

The windfall tax has to raise £3 billion to fulfil the Government's youth employment pledges but some ministers are believed to be arguing that the target should be much higher, perhaps allowing companies to pay in two stages. A figure between £5 billion and £7 billion has been suggested in some quarters.

The water companies will fuel the controversy over high profits when they start reporting next week. Analysts forecast that profits from the electricity and water companies yet to report will show a 13.5 per cent rise on the £5.9 billion delivered in 1995-96. Factored in to the figures are expected returns for the regional electricity companies now in American ownership.

Dividends are also expected

to soar. Many water companies have promised to pay dividends that grow at a rate far in excess of the market average. Analysts do not expect them to moderate this to pacify the Treasury, which is now hearing submissions from companies arguing for exemption or a low levy.

Electricity company investors are likely to receive £1.3 billion in dividends this year while water companies will pay about £760 million. This comes on top of a massive programme of share buy-backs and special dividends that last year made the utilities sector a bonanza for the City.

The utilities will be lifting the payout to shareholders by 17 per cent over last year's figures. The comparison excludes companies that have since been taken over. Dividend growth for Yorkshire Water will top 18 per cent while South West Water is forecast to be more than 22 per cent.

The profits of some companies will leap phenomenally this year after they recover from heavy costs taken last year to restructure businesses and integrate takeovers. Hyder, the Welsh multi-utility formed when Welsh Water bought Swalec, its neighbouring electricity company, in 1995, is expected to lift its profits by 84 per cent to £208 million. Thames Water, which has the highest leakage rate in the country at just under 40 per cent, is predicted to lift profits by 56 per cent to £350 million after it took high restructuring charges last year. Yorkshire Water, which last year took a £47 million charge to pay for emergency measures in the 1995 drought, will lift its figures by about 34 per cent to £218 million.

Nigel Hawkins, utilities analyst at Yamaichi, expects the Treasury to take strong signals from the figures and the commitment of companies to aggressive dividend policies. But he believes the companies will attempt to dress up high figures with customer promises. "They will hike up what they have done for customers and any reduction in leakage rates will be heavily touted."

Angelos Anastasiou, analyst at Parnore Gordon, said: "The companies are resigned to the windfall tax. I don't expect them to try to suppress the dividends artificially. They will deliver what they have promised."

National Power and PowerGen last week reported profits of £740 million and £575 million respectively. ScottishPower has also delivered a jump of 37 per cent to £538 million after its absorption of Southern Water.



Even the Queen wore protective shoes at the opening of the microchip plant in Wallsend

Siemens plans 1,000 new jobs

By OLIVER AUGUST

PLANS to create a further 1,000 jobs in Tyneside as part of Britain's biggest inward investment have been drawn up by Siemens, the German electronics group that is already one of the biggest employers in the North East.

The group's £1.1 billion microchip plant is set for

dramatic expansion as the chip market recovers from its recent 75 per cent price plunge. It was officially opened by the Queen yesterday with video pictures and sound transmitted live on the Internet. The quality was poor and deteriorated as more people logged on for the Queen's first live appearance on the World Wide Web.

Siemens's 750-strong work-

force will more than double when two plants are added in coming years. Most of the extra jobs will be in high-skill engineering areas.

The group has already hinted that the workforce should reach 1,500 when the second plant is finished on a site near the old Swan Hunter shipyard. A third plant, as yet undisclosed, is expected.

Halifax shares may top 700p

By CAROLINE MERRELL

HALIFAX members can look forward to a bumper windfall from their share handout when trading begins next week, according to IG Index.

The City bookmaker forecasts that the shares could rise above 700p on the first day of trading. A Halifax member receiving a minimum of 300 shares can look forward to a windfall of £1,400 — more than £500 higher than the original estimate of £840, based on Halifax's own estimate of 420p per share.

An opening share price of 700p would value the Halifax at more than £15 billion, when it makes its stock market debut on June 2. Nearly eight million Halifax customers will benefit from the free shares. An estimated two thirds of them will get the basic 200 shares, while the rest will get more depending on the amount they have saved.

Shares in Alliance & Leicester, the former building society, which floated last month, yesterday rose 39p to 638p. These shares have now risen more than 100p since flotation on April 21.

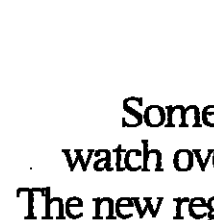
About 27 per cent of Alliance & Leicester's shareholders sold their shares on the first day via the dealing service offered by A&L. Despite the fact that dealing was free, these shareholders received less for their shares than those who sold on the open market immediately. Some of the initial buoyancy in the Alliance share price was attributed to bid speculation. The size of the Halifax makes it an unlikely bid target.

The experience of A&L shareholders means it is unlikely that as many Halifax shareholders will sell their shares immediately. A scarcity of shares will push up the Halifax share price even further.

WEEKEND MONEY



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on the duties of
a watchdog

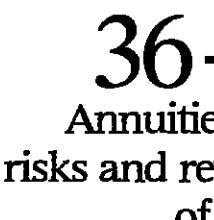


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FTSE 100	4851.8	(+10.0)
FTSE All share	2216.7	(+4.0)
Nikkei	20098.00	(+131.81)
Dow Jones	7297.89	(+30.58)
S&P Composite	940.51	(+4.85)
London	5.45%	(57.44)
Long Bond	95%	(95.50)
Yield	6.98%	(6.98%)
3-month bank bill	5.75%	(5.75%)
Life long gilt	112%	(111%)

New York	1.6325	(1.6240)
London	1.6301	(1.6245)
DM	2.7259	(2.7277)
FR	0.2857	(0.2184)
Yen	2.2942	(2.3254)
S. Index	102.1	(102.1)

London	1.6910	(1.6945)
DM	5.6989	(5.7055)
FR	1.4055	(1.4150)
Yen	115.65	(115.11)
S. Index	102.6	(102.1)

Brent 15-day (Aug)	\$20.00	(\$20.20)
London close	\$943.15	(\$942.75)

* Devices midday trading price

GKN battle

GKN scored a vital point in its continuing US court battle which may be enough to safeguard most of last year's profit. The automotive and aerospace group won the right to appeal against one of the biggest damages awards ever made against a British company in America. Page 28

Shares dive as Laura Ashley directors go

By PAUL DURMAN

SHARES in Laura Ashley yesterday fell to their lowest level since July 1995 as two senior management departures sparked talk of a management rebellion in the troubled fashion and furnishing chain.

As a company spokeswoman dismissed a report of a management crisis as "wildly inaccurate speculation", the shares dipped 7p to 95p, down from last year's peak of 219p. When Ann Iverson, who is paid more than £1 million a year, was named as Laura Ashley chief executive in June 1995, the shares were 80p.

The setback stems from the impending departures of Julie Ramsbaw, merchandising director, and Dominic Lavelle, finance director for the UK and Europe, who are both 34. Mr Lavelle is to be finance director of a quoted company. Ms Ramsbaw, who joined Laura Ashley early last year, is said to be returning to the City, where she used to be an analyst.

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BCCI losers win fraudster's funds

By JON ASHWORTH

VICTIMS of the collapsed Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) won an important victory yesterday, when a High Court judge ruled that they are entitled to nearly £3 million from the estate of Abbas Gokal, the disgraced BCCI fraudster.

Gokal, jailed for 14 years earlier this month, had been ordered to pay £2.94 million within two years or face an additional three years in prison. Mr Justice Buxton, the trial judge, has extended his original confiscation order to include compensation, meaning that any monies recovered will now pass to the BCCI liquidators, not the Treasury. Recoveries will contribute to future BCCI payouts.

The confiscation order was the biggest passed in British courts. Christopher Morris, of Deloitte & Touche, the joint liquidator of BCCI, said that he was "very pleased" with the development, but intends to press on with a raft of civil actions against Gokal and others, including the Bank of

England. Mr Morris said: "The damage he caused to BCCI and its creditors was significant, and we will continue to pursue his assets worldwide."

Gokal enjoyed a millionaire lifestyle as head of the Gulf Group, flying first class, and staying at the world's most exclusive hotels. He conspired with senior executives of BCCI to siphon off huge sums over the years, enjoying the proceeds even as his shipping company fell deeper and deeper into debt. The Gulf Group owed \$12 billion to BCCI by the time BCCI was shut down by the Bank of England in 1991.

Yesterday's move was welcomed by Keith Vaz, MP for Leicester East, who has campaigned on behalf of victims of the BCCI fraud. Mr Vaz said: "I'm absolutely delighted by the decision, because it means that those who have suffered as a result of the fraud will now benefit." He urged BCCI's liquidators to push through the recoveries as swiftly as possible.

Davies is Bank policy nominee

By GRAHAM SEARJEANT
FINANCIAL EDITOR

HOWARD DAVIES, the departing Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, is to be one of the Bank's four nominees on the eight-man interim monetary policy committee at its first meeting on June 6.

Eddie George, the Governor, will chair the committee. As expected, the Bank's other representatives are Mervyn King, its economic director, and Ian Penderleith, the Bank's man in City markets.

The City is watching anxiously for the Chancellor's choice of four monetary advisers, yet to be announced. Only a list

with strong anti-inflation views will still the disquiet after this week's whispers from Government sources that Mr George will not be reappointed next year.

Two former Bank of England economists are tipped as Establishment candidates. Charles Goodhart, 60, was its long-term monetary adviser before returning to the London School of Economics. John Flemming, 56, chief economic adviser during the 1980s, returned to Oxford.

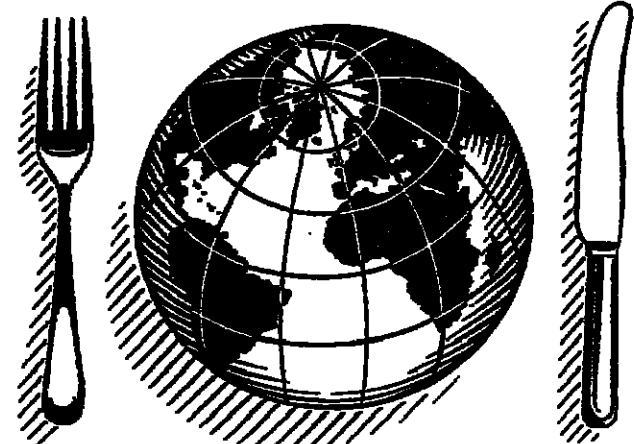
Lord Currie, 50, of the London Business School, is a Labour peer. As David Currie, he was one of Kenneth Clarke's independent economic forecasters. These started as the wise men but two women later joined: Bridget Rosewell of Business

Strategies, and Kate Barker of the CBI. Mr Brown will be anxious for the Bank's monetary committee not to be men-only. Marian Bell, respected economist at the Royal Bank of Scotland, is tipped.

Among City economists, Roger Bootle of Midland Bank carries weight. Richard Layard, the economist, is expected to play a role but may become one of the economic advisers who will replace the panel.

Gavin Davies, a partner in Goldman Sachs and a friend of Mr Brown and Tony Blair, remains the favourite to succeed Mr Davies, who is due to head the Securities and Investments Board from July.

"Table for 15 billion, please."



A tall order? Recent indicators suggest otherwise. In fact, the outlook for feeding the 15 billion diners expected to inhabit the planet by the end of the next century has never looked brighter.

The question is, what will be on the menu? As Europe goes cold on meat, countries like China demand more every year. Martin Currie has the international investment expertise to make sense of changes in the world's food markets, as they become free from the restraints of geography and season. So may we suggest a starter?

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A WORKING WEEK FOR: ALLAN BRIDGEWATER

A goal in sight for cautious revolutionary

Martin Waller meets the insurance man whose careful leadership has been behind Norwich Union's transformation

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Train drivers, nuclear power workers or insurance men, who are charged with ensuring the money is there to tide their clients over life's little mishaps or ensure a prosperous retirement.

Allan Bridgewater has been an insurance man throughout his working life, and he is a deeply cautious man. For Norwich Union, the group he will take to the stock market next month, it has been caution every step of the way — from when the company confirmed in October 1995 its intention to float, right up to last week's announcement of a special discount for members wanting extra shares.

That 1995 announcement was like one of those declarations of intention to fight for the Conservative Party leadership just after the election. It was made with all due formality, and it told the market nothing new. Norwich Union had always been expected to be one of those mutuals, whether building societies or insurance companies, to demutualise and float, to the benefit of its three million members. It was significant that it took the insurer most of 1995 to confirm this intention.

Bridgewater spent 30 years steeped in the mutual insurance industry, a deeply conservative, inward-looking business which, as is the way with such mutual organisations, was theoretically answerable to its members but in reality answerable to nobody. He was appointed chief executive in 1989 and spent the next few years trying to turn round this culture into one more suitable for a public quoted company.

He was helped, if that is the term, by the stock market crash, the property market collapse, the Gulf War and some horrendous results from the general insurance industry in 1990 and 1991. This made the process of injecting change into the business rather easier than it had all had been plain sailing. But it must have been difficult coping with all that, surely? "Yes."

Pressed, he adds: "The shock associated with that combination engendered an environment in which the process of change probably was more readily addressed and accepted than had we not had that combination of circumstances."

Many of Bridgewater's pronouncements come out like that, as if taken straight from the annual chief executive's report, sentences perfect in structure if a little heavy in management

speech. This is not because he is unhelpful, but he is clearly one of those people who believe in engaging his brain fully before he opens his mouth. This and a natural courtesy give his speech the flavour of written prose.

He is, he says, enormously interested in words, and their derivation, digressing unexpectedly to explain the source of the word sincere (it has to do with ancient potters and whether their faulty ware was disguised with wax). This fascination might be surprising in one who left school at 16 to work as an office boy at the Scottish Union, which ended up with the Norwich in 1959.

Bridgewater's career was interrupted by the obligatory National Service, at Hornchurch, as a personnel selection assessor for the RAF. This seems an onerous responsibility for a mere 18-year-old, slotting aircrew into the proper job, but he says summing up people is still one of his main strengths.

By the age of 20 Bridgewater was back in insurance, and with his first company car — he reels off make, colour, distinguishing features and the number plate, and then repeats the trick for its successor. Ask him why he chose insurance, against the promptings of his

father, a grocer, who tried to steer him into a career in light engineering — "He thought that air-conditioning was something of the future, and a natural ability to hold a screwdriver" — and his memory abruptly fails: "It's a long time ago to recall the exact sequence of events."

Again you press him. He adds: "I was determined to do my own thing. Insurance had a broader remit than banking, I was interested to do something in the sphere of commercial, office-based enterprise with opportunities in career terms that took one out of the office."

In essence, it was a blue collar/white collar choice, he admits. Wisely, he eschewed the screwdriver for the fountain pen. Bridgewater's progression to chief executive took him through an organisation as rigid and hidebound as any civil service department, where the size of one's office, carpet and the minutest change of job title defined one's place in the hierarchy. An outsider, one who joined as chief executive, for example, would be more dismissive of all this. He is, typically, more tactful.

"You should be able in a positive way to justify change rather than base it rather negatively on criticism of your predecessors," he says. "If you are suddenly pitched into the hot seat and you reflect on what the future holds and believe that Norwich Union needs major change in terms of its culture, financial disciplines or people, either you do nothing about it and drift on, or you say 'we are in for an extended period of change'."



Allan Bridgewater is confident that Norwich Union has a future as an independent operator despite being open to predators once the shares are quoted

He is equally guarded about his political views — "I and Norwich Union are apolitical." But he admits to some excitement at the appointment of Frank Field to look at reform of the welfare state. Private pensions, healthcare, protection of income — it can only be good for his company, he accepts.

Some City observers believe that however much the culture may have changed, Norwich Union could easily be picked off by a predator once the shares are quoted on June 16 and freely available.

"I still remain confident that Norwich Union has a future as an independent operator," says Bridgewater. "There's no reason why Norwich Union should not be sensibly cast in the role of one of those who will be a player in the market, rather than be played."

Press him harder — again — on whether he would feel a sense of personal failure if his career came to an end in such a way, and he admits he would be "gobsnacked". That means surprised, surely, I ask this self-con-

fessed words buff. "Disappointed", comes the alternative, then upgraded to "very disappointed".

Ahead of him there is the sheer awfulness of a three-week institutional roadshow, now under way, putting over the same message again and again. Would he become tired, or bored even? He likens himself, whimsically, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, also charged with putting over the same message on frequent occasions without moving too far from the correct line.

"I think it's an exciting prospect to share positively this transformed Nor-

wich Union as a worthwhile investment," he says. "It will be tiring, I've no doubt, but I enjoy talking about Norwich Union. If you believe what you are saying, then okay, while there may be an element of tiredness, your conviction or commitment in saying it should be the same at the end as at the beginning."

But takeover or not, retirement still looms at the end of this year, at the age of 61. "There is, even for me, a life outside and beyond Norwich Union," says Bridgewater. But he is not going to say what it might hold.

"I haven't quite had time to think all

that through. I think there will be some business opportunities where such experience as I have I will bring into play." He is a council member of Business in the Community, and trustee and treasurer of the Duke of Edinburgh's Commonwealth Study Conference, among other good works.

"There's an opportunity to spend more time with my wife. There are places I've been to and never seen anything else but the hotel and the office."

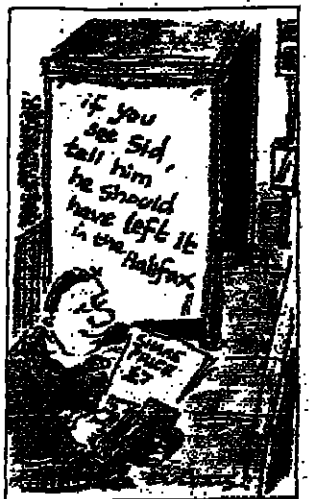
"I honestly have to sort that sort of thing out once we have this prime project of the NU flotation out of the way."

Cradle snatch

BOOTIES — at dawn on the King's Road, I hear Sophie Mirman, the sock shop founder, has ambitions for her children's shoes, the delightfully named Trotters. Mirman, who has one on the King's Road and another on High Street Kensington, jointly turning over £3.5 million a year, plans a move into mail order in the autumn, selling clothes, shoes, toys, books and accessories. Says Mirman, who built a paper £50 million fortune in the 1980s before events turned against her: "We get faces from all over the world from people wanting shoes."

Trotters has a hairdressing facility — something which has not gone unnoticed elsewhere. Tim Waterstone, considerably richer after selling his bookshops to W H Smith in 1994, is about to open Daisy & Tom, a children's shop which will bear a strange resemblance to the above and will be just around the corner. No coincidence, perhaps, that Waterstone has been a regular at Trotters since Mirman opened her first shop in 1990.

● A TENDER filial tale reaches me from the Sykes family. Sir Richard Sykes, chairman of Glaxo Wellcome,

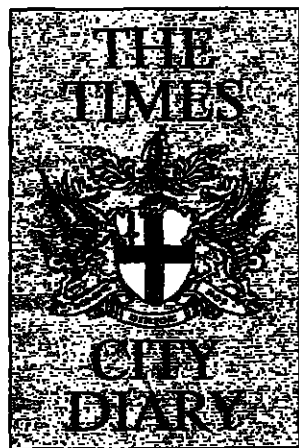


is on the phone to his mum. Mrs Sykes complains of a dreadful tummy-ache. "What you need is some Zantac," he says. Zantac, the wonder ulcer drug, cornerstone of Glaxo's fortunes, best-selling compound in the world, just the thing. So Mrs Sykes goes down to the chemist. He, alas, has no truck with the fancier pharmaceuticals. He sells Mrs Sykes some bicarb. Mrs Sykes gets on the phone to her boy again. Sir Richard, keen to avenge this slight, promises to send her some pronto. Except that there is none to hand at Glaxo Wellcome. So someone has to toddle down to the chemist.

Japanese tip

LEAVING through my advance copy of European Pharmaceutical Contractor, I see Dr Malcolm Vandenberg, who sold his pharmaceutical research company to the Japanese and still runs it, has provided some tips for Margaret Beckett ahead of her trip to Japan this weekend. Be both confident and self-effacing, which seems tricky even for the most two-faced politician. Do not pat small children on the head, Margaret, so no kissing babies. The stickiest bit is the evening entertaining, because it is so hard to tell when the formalities have ended and the fun is beginning. "The Japanese change salamander-like spontaneously," says Vandenberg mysteriously. Does he mean that one moment they're fine, the next they're all inebriated as news?

THOSE of you still enjoying your breakfast, pass over this bit. North West Water won a public apology at the High Court yesterday from The Ormskirk Advertiser, which last year published a story claiming that the company had provided strangely con-



taminated water to a house, as a result of which a resident had suffered serious health problems. I suppose the original headline was a bit provocative: "Human flesh found in water."

Job for Julie

JULIE RAMSHAW, the former City retail analyst who has just exited from Laura Ashley under mysterious circumstances, can strike Hoare Govett off her list of prospective employers. I suggested yesterday she might care to approach the Dutch-owned broker, but, alas, one of the two posts going there on the retail team has just been filled. Eithne O'Leary is moving from corporate finance next month to try her luck as an analyst — not before time, because in July her new colleague, Emma Burdett, is off on maternity leave. This still leaves a hole at Hoare, which is keen to expand retail coverage into Europe.

What can we find for poor Julie, then? My spy says there is great ferment on the retail pitches. She might try Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, where she will bump into some old mates from Morgan Stanley. Salomon Brothers is expanding. James Capel might be after someone on the retail side. There's a whole world out there, Julie. Go for it.

● EBN, the business news service, has polled the Tory lead-

ership rivals for their computer literacy, and found that almost all have no use for the Internet. The exception, predictably, is John Redwood, no stranger to advanced electronic communications — he uses them to keep in touch with the mothership.

On the fence

INVESTORS at next week's Williams Holdings annual meeting will be asked to pass a resolution allowing the company to make political donations totalling £25,000 a year. Curious, because Williams has for a good five years now made just such an award to the Conservative Party, an event possibly connected to chairman Sir Nigel Rudd's links with the Derby Tories. A spokesman at Williams at first denies the existence of any such proposal. Then another suggests this is a legal requirement, which it is not. Then he says it is required by the Cadbury Code, which is not the case either.

I wonder, playfully, whether Sir Nigel has caught the spirit of the times, and wants permission to switch Williams's allegiances. At this, the various Williams spokesmen go into a curious kind of huddle, from which no sound emerges. Perhaps someone might ask for clarification on Wednesday.

MARTIN WALLER



Sykes: filial responsibility

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A textbook example of how to fight back



THE TIMES PERSONAL FINANCE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR



Slimming regime for regulators

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, this week seized City watchdogs by the collar and promised radical reforms which he argued were "essential to ensure the future confidence of investors".

Under Mr Brown's reforms, existing junior watchdogs responsible for regulating sales of life assurance, personal pensions and investments to the public will be gobbled up by a new, super Securities and Investments Board, which will also take on responsibility for banks.

Building societies also look set to come under the super SIB umbrella, although the Building Societies Commission, the current regulator, has yet to be informed of its fate.

The aim of the planned shake-up is to destroy once and for all the current unwieldy and discredited system of regulation, which since its implementation ten years ago, has presided over some of the worst financial scandals of recent times. Pension mis-selling, the home income plan scandal, BCCI and the theft of pensioners' money from Mirror Group Newspapers have all made headline news and meant losses totalling billions of pounds for innocent investors.

Less high profile but just as upsetting have been individual investors' battles to seek redress from a system apparently constructed more to satisfy the vested interests of the financial services industry than to provide genuine help.

Mr Brown's promise of change was welcomed by all sides. But slimming down the

Sara McConnell reports on the Chancellor's plans to replace City watchdogs with a super SIB

excessive number of regulators is only part of it. The existing legislation is also full of holes. It does not cover deposit accounts. Members of the public taking out mortgages, or buying expensive private medical insurance, long-stay care insurance or permanent health insurance policies are covered only by flimsy self-regulatory "codes of conduct". There are no punitive sanctions for firms transgressing such codes. How far is Mr Brown prepared to go? And what is the shape of the system he has to tackle?

Who regulates what? I still don't understand the system.

You are not alone. Few investors do, which is a major indictment of it. In a nutshell, Mr Brown's reforms will focus mainly on the system set up under the Financial Services Act 1986. This was intended to protect investors from fraud and mis-selling after a rash of City scandals, including Barlow Clowes. The Act created a chief regulator, the Securities and Investments Board. The SIB delegates responsibility for different sectors of invest-

ment to three main junior regulators. These are the Personal Investment Authority (sales of life assurance, pensions, unit trusts, investment trusts and other investments to the public by banks, building societies, life companies and independent financial advisers), the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation (fund management, including unit trusts and investment trusts) and the Securities and Futures Authority (stockbroking and portfolio management). Depending on their businesses, firms may have to be members of more than one body.

So what will happen after this?

That is the big question. The Government plans to introduce legislation, probably in the Parliament starting in November 1998, to shake up the regulators under the Financial Services Act. But it also committed itself in its manifesto to extending protection under the Act to mortgage borrowers. It will certainly come under pressure also to include other sorts of insurance, like private medical cover, long-stay care insurance and permanent health

insurance which pays an income to those who cannot work through illness.

But why are these not covered at the moment?

The argument is that the Act only covers investments. Mortgages, for example, are technically debts, not investments, although an endowment policy taken out with the loan to repay it after 25 years is an investment under the Act.

Insurance policies taken out to protect health or income pay for potential protection and do not return premiums to policyholders at the end of a term if they have not claimed. These are not deemed to be investments. Confusingly, a number of medical and health policies are now designed to pay back something at the end and they do come under the Act. In short, the whole thing is a mess.

Do I have any protection if Mr Brown does not change the Act?

Nothing very effective. Over the past few years there has been an outcrop of "codes of conduct" introduced by the trade associations of banks, building societies and insurance companies.

Currently there are codes for selling mortgages, general insurance (motor and household), private medical insurance, critical illness cover and mortgage payment protection insurance (to cover ill or out-of-work mortgage borrowers). These have been attacked regularly by consumer groups and the media as lacking teeth.

WEEKEND MONEY is edited by Anne Ashworth

Shaping the future of tax-free savings

The Individual Savings Account, Labour's as yet ill-defined solution to encourage thrift, should take clearer shape in the Budget. KPMG, the accountancy firm, expects the Chancellor to announce that he is beginning consultation on these new vehicles, promised in the Labour manifesto.

It is not clear whether ISAs would replace personal equity plans (PEPs) and tax-exempt special savings accounts (Tessas). While Labour has said that it is not opposed to these schemes, some now

believe that the Government supports only the principle of tax-free savings, not PEPs and Tessas per se.

Some cite a letter sent last November by Alistair Darling, now Chief Secretary to the Treasury, in a reply to a question on the future of PEPs and Tessas, in which he reiterates his party's support of PEPs and Tessas, but adds that Chancellors must reserve the right to review the tax treatment of savings.

It seems unlikely that Mr Brown would move to abolish PEPs and Tessas with immedi-

ate effect as this would be highly disruptive. However, Jason Hollands of BEST Investment, the PEP research group, suggests that anyone contemplating using their £9,000 annual PEP allowance should invest before the Budget. BEST Investment publishes a list of PEP best buys (0171-321 0100).

One easy target for the Chancellor would be the recent concession allowing building society windfall shares to be transferred into a PEP at zero value, so boosting the amounts that can be

sheltered from the taxman each year. Before the election, Labour is known to have examined the idea of taxing demutualisation windfalls in a special levy. But most believe that the Chancellor would not make such a measure retrospective, as he would incur the wrath of the millions of recipients of these payouts.

However, any future demutualisations, including those of mutual insurers, could well be vulnerable.

ANNE ASHWORTH

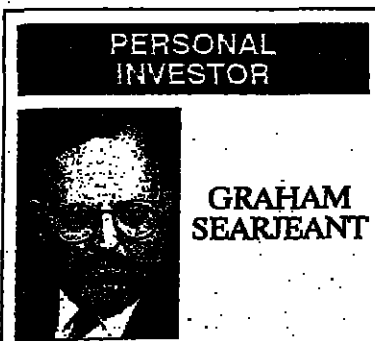
Their words and your bonds

Political reactions are odd at the moment. Few would have guessed that interest yields on government stock would fall half a percentage point in the first fortnight after a Labour landslide. Investors showed little fear ahead of the election, as long-term interest rates continued a three-year stuttering downward trend. There was no reaction when Labour won a more commanding majority than the City had allowed for. The real surprise came when Gordon Brown suddenly reinforced his anti-inflation credentials by handing monetary policy over to a committee in the Bank of England. Shocks can be good for investors.

If the new regime stands a good chance of keeping inflation down at about 3 per cent, then long-term gilt-edged stocks yielding much above 7 per cent become fair value. At least, they are fair value for those who do not have to pay hefty income tax on the interest.

The first crack in this smooth progress appeared this week. After the Bank of England was shorn of its role as banking supervisor at 24 hours notice, the aggrieved Eddie George put a brave face on it. But there were soon reports of an irreparable rift with the Chancellor. They came from government sources who let it be known that they wished to get rid of the stern Mr George as soon as possible, certainly next year, when his term of office comes up for renewal.

Scoundrels noticed that the Chancellor would now be appointing six of the nine members of the new "independent" monetary committee even if Mr George stayed. This political briefing against



PERSONAL INVESTOR

GRAHAM SEARJEANT

Steady Eddie dispelled the euphoria Mr Brown injected into the bond market.

By coincidence, or so traders claim, a routine £1.5 billion auction of new long-term government debt on Thursday soon turned into a fiasco. The issue was more of an existing Treasury 8 per cent stock, repayable in the year 2021, the main long-dated gilt-edged stock for big investors. Bids covered the amount on offer only 1.3 times at the lowest accepted price, which was some way below the average. The interest yield on the stock rose 0.13 per cent on the day to 7.32 per cent. A blip perhaps, though it would be no great surprise if long yields returned to 7.5 per cent before the damage is over. The yield on the 30-year US government bond is again pushing 7 per cent.

Looking a bit further ahead, the case for sterling bonds still looks good. Whatever the machinations, Mr Brown has a vital interest in keeping inflation low until the next election. If investors believe this, prices of gilt-edged stocks

with many years to run will rise. The yield on 10-year gilt-edged, at about 7 per cent, is still about 1.3 points higher than a similar German government bond.

Some further rise in short-term interest rates is likely for about a year to curb inflation. That affects gilt-edged yields. It should also keep sterling strong, encouraging foreigners to buy British bonds that yield more than their own.

Private investors looking to draw income should note that high dividends are now politically incorrect and may be discouraged by tax changes. Such moves may well fail. Meantime, the advantage of shares for income investors will narrow. Several water shares, for instance, yield about 6 per cent before the "windfall" tax, which will make it harder to raise dividends.

Instead, gilt-edged could enjoy an untaxed windfall. If sterling interest rates will be equalised somewhat nearer to continental than British levels. There is a small but genuine possibility of this happening in 1999, and a fair probability for 2002.

The virtues of locking in income by buying bonds rather than high-yield shares still depend crucially on your tax rate. Standard or higher-rate taxpayers should be wary. The main attraction is for funds in tax-free personal equity plans. These cannot plunge into gilt-edged, but can buy high-grade corporate bonds issued by safe names. Fortunately, these have the additional attraction of yielding about 0.5 to 0.8 per cent more than the equivalent gilt-edged.

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Gavin Lumsden with good news of the latest demutualisation Winning double at Norwich

Norwich Union members had a double dose of good news this week. The life insurer announced a special deal for members who want to top up their allocation of free shares when the company floats on June 16. They can now apply to buy shares at 25p less than other investors will have to pay. As an additional bonus it revealed that the value of windfalls would also rise.

NU now estimates its shares will fetch between 240p and 290p in the public offer to investors, an increase on its original figure of 220p-265p. This rise boosts the dividend to the average policyholder from 5800 to £10,000, although it does make buying the extra shares more expensive.

Jeremy Batsone, head of research at NatWest Stockbrokers, said: "Members should seriously consider taking up this offer as it is an extremely attractive proposition." Speculation that it may be taken over by a bidder such as AMP, the Australian insurer, and the fact that it will enter the FT-SE 100 index in September is likely to push its share price upwards. Its business prospects are good, having a strong brand and being the country's third-largest insurer.

The company is already committed to distributing £3 billion worth of free shares to 2.9 million members worldwide. On top of this it hopes to sell another £2.4 billion in what will be the largest UK



Norwich fan: Peter Wisner intends to use the company's single-company Pep for his shares

share offer to combine private investors and institutions.

The company has earmarked between £800 million and £1.2 billion for members to buy, and set aside another £150 million for private investors and its employees. A total of £1.2 billion will be sold to City and overseas institutions.

This week the company sent out share application forms to its members. These should be returned by 2pm on Tuesday, June 10, whether you intend to buy additional shares or not. If you do want more shares fill in sections 2-5, stating the amount you want to spend,

and sign and date the form in section 6. The minimum NU will accept is £400 with a ceiling set at £100,000. The effect of the 25p price reduction means you can expect to pay in the region of 215p-265p. This could save you £40 if you buy the minimum amount.

Richard Harvey, NU's deputy group chief executive, has promised that all members who want to buy more shares will be able to do so. Applications for large amounts may be scaled back more than smaller applications in the event of strong demand. If you are happy to stick

with your allotment of free shares you must fill in sections 2, 3 and 6 to confirm this. In section 2 you have to decide whether you want to hold the shares in the Norwich Union Share Account or receive a share certificate.

NU will only release details of the charges of its share account and dealing service after the flotation. However, it says members will be able to receive dividends and vote and attend at company AGMs. The cheapest way to buy and sell the shares will be by post - NU will charge 0.5 per cent of the shares' value.

As with the other windfalls NU members will have 42 days from 16 June to transfer their free shares into the tax-free shelter of a Pep on top of the annual subscription limit of £9,000. Choosing the Norwich Union Share Account will limit you to the single-company Pep it plans to launch. Opting for a share certificate allows you to transfer into the Pep of another provider. However, basic-rate taxpayers may find the costs of the Pep shelter outweigh the benefits.

The price discount means NU members can put even more shares in a Pep than they could otherwise have done. Peter Wisner, who runs a training company in the City of London and is a committed Pep investor, has decided to do this. Mr Wisner invests the maximum £9,000 in Peps each year, using the tax shelter to provide the school fees for his two children. He has held an endowment mortgage with NU since 1980 and expects to receive £1,200 of free shares when it floats. Although he has a general Pep with Mercury Asset Management which could hold the shares, he thinks he will transfer them to NU's single-company Pep and apply for an extra £3,000 of shares to use his annual allocation.

NU has a helpline on 0645 444818. Investors can obtain a prospectus and application form on 0541 578 578. It must be returned by June 5.

Colonial duo scoop £100,000

Two Colonial policyholders in the UK made more than £100,000 from selling shares in the company on the first day of trading. The policyholders, brothers, had a total of 77,000 Colonial shares under the terms of the flotation. On average, the 100,000 UK policyholders who sold on the first day of trading will get £130 per share. More than 28 million shares - 5 per cent of the issued capital - changed hands that day.

The company allocated a minimum of 225 shares per shareholder, but Colonial claims that more than half the policyholders have more than 1,000 shares in the company - 255,000 policyholders in the UK qualify for shares.

Colonial's shares rose 9p above their listing price to £1.56 (£1.33) on the first day of trading. This represents an instant 21 per cent gain for the group's UK policyholders who were issued shares at £1.22 (£1.26) as part of the group's demutualisation last year. Those who sold straight

away will get only £130 per share, because of the strength of sterling. Cheques for those who sold their shares immediately will be dispatched from Australia at the end of this month. Rob Garnsworthy, managing director of Colonial in the UK, said: "Flotation is a major landmark in Colonial's 124-year history and a substantial achievement for all involved."

However, the 155,000 UK shareholders who chose to keep their shares will not be able to sell immediately what they are worth, as the company is not going to be quoted on the UK stock market, although UK shareholders now hold 18 per cent of the shares. Mr Garnsworthy said that it had chosen not to go for listing on the UK market because it did not wish to go through separate legal processes involved on listing on both the Australian, New Zealand and UK stock exchanges.

He said it was offering its shareholders 24-hour recorded details of the movements in Colonial's share price. The number for checking the share price is 0345 697502. Colonial is the second Australian life insurer to demutualise, after National Mutual of Australia. AMP, one of Australia's biggest life insurance companies, is also in the process of shedding its mutual status.

AMP, which was rebuffed as a purchaser for Scottish Amicable in the UK, is believed to be poised to bid for another UK insurer. The company, which already owns London Life and Pearl, has appointed D.J. Phoenix, a mergers and acquisitions specialist, to work on the bid. NPI Friends Provident and Norwich Union have all been tipped as takeover candidates. However, UK policyholders with London Life and Pearl will not benefit from the demutualisation.

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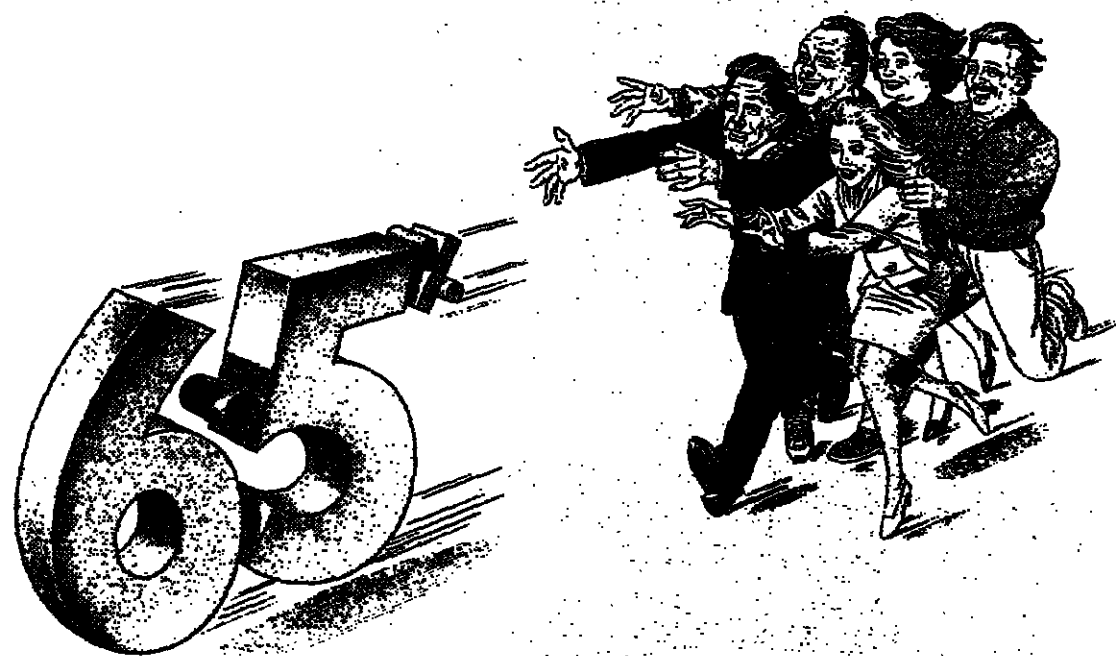
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Watchdog with attitude needed

The news that a new watchdog is to stand guard over our savings should be greeted with some caution. It is too early to breathe a sigh of relief and presume that, henceforth, all investments will be properly sold and that best advice will mean just that.

To date, little in the Chancellor's proposals for the creation of this super-regulator suggest its structures will prohibit another scandal on the scale of the personal pensions affair. Whatever the extra disciplinary powers given to the new body, it is unlikely that it will be able to fully curb the mightier among its charges, such as the life insurance companies. Some in this industry will pay lip service, as before, to the regulator's rules, meanwhile continuing to pursue business in their traditional buccaneering style.

During the 10 years since the Financial Services Act was passed,



ANNE ASHWORTH
Personal Finance Editor

some life companies have become adept at designing schemes that meet the criteria set by the watchdogs but fail to give good value to the consumer. At other groups, outwitting the men from the regulators seems to have become a favourite sport. This week it was reported that Prudential staff had communicated with each other by secret hand signals, while dealing with Securities and Investments Board visitors.

The system needed reform. For the uninitiated, the differences between the various investor protection bodies were arcane and confusing. It is more logical that those seeking information or wishing to complain will be able to deal with a single organisation. There is, however, a danger that the publicity will give too great a comfort to individuals. They will wrongly presume that every type of financial arrangement is covered. The current system excludes anything that is not, strictly speaking, an investment. This means that you can pay a £10,000 premium for a long-

term care policy but have no recourse to the regulator if it goes wrong.

Some say these arrangements and mortgages should come under the aegis of the new organisation. But this apparently neat solution would not necessarily serve consumers' interests. Responsibility for these areas would further increase the pressure on what already threatens to be an unwieldy bureaucracy.

Peps caution

THE individual savings account, Gordon Brown's solution to the British reluctance to save long term, may eventually supplant the personal equity plan (PEP). But the Chancellor should, however, remember that not every PEP holder is a well-heeled higher-rate taxpayer. Thousands are now saving in Peps to repay mortgages. Satisfactory transitional arrangements must be made for them.

Bridging the property gap



Desperate homebuyers are being tempted into taking out risky and expensive bridging loans to buy a new property without having first sold their existing home. A shortage of good properties, particularly in London and the South East, means buyers are under pressure to move fast when they find what they want.

The reappearance of bridging loans will revive memories of the excesses of the 1980s boom. Then borrowers committed themselves to loans on two properties but were caught out when the market turned down and they could not sell their original home.

Barclays said this week it had seen a significant rise in applications for bridging loans in March and April of this year. Amounts being borrowed have also risen from about £50,000 to the high £60,000s, it said.

Many lenders no longer offer such loans, after having had their fingers badly burnt in the early 1990s. Those who do, distinguish between "closed" and "open" loans. Closed loans are short-term loans to borrowers who have exchanged contracts to sell their home but have not yet completed. A short-term

**Sara McConnell
says the dearth
of good property
has brought back
short-term loans**

bridging loan provides the necessary funds to complete on another property before someone else does.

Open loans are far riskier. They involve borrowers who may not even have found a buyer for their own home taking out a loan to buy another property without knowing when or if they will complete on their original one.

But if a bridging loan seems the only option, bear the following in mind.

■ Even if you are offered an open bridging loan, think realistically about your chances of selling your existing property. The more difficult your home is to sell, the more exposed you will be. If you have not even found a buyer you will be making high payments on a bridging loan for months on top of other moving expenses.

■ Borrow as little as possible. According to Nick Deutsch of

the First Mortgage Group "you are by definition stretching yourself. If you have a mortgage on your existing property, you will be paying two mortgages. It is a calculated gamble." You do not want to find yourself in negative equity on the property which you are trying to sell. This could happen if the market turns down.

■ Lenders will normally take a second charge on your existing property as well as using your prospective property as security, particularly if you want to borrow a large proportion of the value of the property you are buying. Remember this will reduce the amount of equity you already have when you do sell. Lenders can insist as a condition of the loan that your solicitor sign a guarantee that the proceeds of your sale go to pay off the bridging loan.

■ Bridging loans are expensive. For a closed bridging loan Barclays charges 3 per cent over base which means a current rate of 9.25 per cent. An open loan costs 9.75 per cent. NatWest charges 10.5 per cent. Lloyds charges 0.95 per cent a month, an APR of 12 per cent. All the banks also charge extra arrangement and legal fees.

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Karen Zagor assesses the current best interest rates for savers



Banks, as ever, will be ready and waiting to take as many deposits from investors as possible in spite of the competition

Competition hots up for windfall cash

Savings in the UK are soaring according to the Abbey National Savings Index. The average saver put aside £390 in the first three months of this year, compared with £310 a year ago.

This is good news because it is widely acknowledged that Britons need to save more. However, many of the savers now looking for homes for their building society windfall cash are being disappointed by the returns on offer. In spite of the increases that have followed the base rate rise.

Abbey National is keen to advertise the 6.55 per cent on its new Investor 90 account. But to get the headline rate, however, investors will need to deposit at least £200,000. Lesser amounts receive lower interest rates.

Abbey National rates will rise by up to 0.30 per cent on June 1. Ambrose McGinn, Abbey's director of retail savings, said: "The rises outstrip the recent 0.25 per cent base rate rise. Our savings customers outnumber our borrowers by seven to one and they have now benefited from four increases in interest rates during the past six months." Yet Abbey's new rates are not impressive enough for the bank to feature in the best buys selection prepared by Moneyfacts, the savings information provider. Those with less than £250 in the Instant Access account do not get a rise.

Abbey's latest offer is the Investor 90 account, introduced last Monday. The account pays 4.40 per cent on amounts between £2,000 and £4,999, rising to 4.70 per cent for £5,000 to £9,999 and rising to 6.55 per cent for deposits above £200,000. For the remainder of this year,

Abbey says the rates will increase by at least the same amount as base rates, provided base rates rise. To attract new customers, there is also a 1 per cent bonus to anyone who invests before end July.

Rates on Abbey's Investor 30 account will rise 0.30 percentage points across the board, so savings of £1,000 to £4,999 will have a new rate of 3.35 per cent and amounts between £5,000 and £9,999 will have a rate of 3.60 per cent. The Bonus Postal account will have a 0.25 percentage point rise across the board. Savings of £2,000 to £9,999 will have a new rate of 5.90 per cent.

There will be no changes to the Instant Saver account for amounts under £250, and the minimum balance to open an account has now been raised to £250. Larger amounts will receive 0.25 percentage points more interest, so savings between £5,000 and £9,999 will have a new rate of 3.25 per cent.

Barclays says it plans to give the building societies a run for their money with its new postal savings account. This pays 4.60 per cent on deposits between £2,000 and £9,999, rising to 4.85 per cent for £10,000 to £24,999 and increasing in steps to 5.85 on deposits above £250,000. The account is instant access with no limit on deposits and up to five withdrawals by cheque a month, with a minimum withdrawal of £100.

Bradford & Bingley was the first to announce post-base-rate savings rises which came into effect on May 18. Its Instant Access postal account rates outstrip those offered by Barclays following a 0.80 point rise across the board to 5.60 per cent for amounts above £1,000, 5.90

per cent for amounts from £10,000 to £24,999, and 6.15 per cent for amounts above £25,000. The 30-day notice postal account now pays 0.65 points more than before, at 3.75 per cent on more than £1,000, 6.10 per cent for over £10,000 and 6.30 per cent for over £25,000.

Among branch accounts, Bradford & Bingley's instant access accounts now pay 0.30 points more, starting at 3.40 per cent for £500 to £4,999 and rising for larger amounts. The first issue Tessa now pays 7 per cent, a 0.25 point rise. The 90-day notice account pays 0.30 points more. Rates have also risen for the 120-day notice and children's accounts.

Nationwide has not yet announced its new rates, but says savings rates will rise on June 1 and details will be released closer to the time. "We will be maintaining our competitive edge," a spokeswoman said. Nationwide already has one of the most attractive postal accounts on the market, paying 6.40 per cent on deposits of between £500 and £9,999, with higher rates for larger amounts.

Anyone with £5,000 to put away would have a hard time beating this rate with an instant access account. Other good deals are offered by Cheltenham & Gloucester, which pays 6 per cent on a similar balance, Coventry Building Society, which pays 5.75 per cent on £5,000 in its first instant postal account, Sainsbury's Bank, with a rate of 5.75 per cent, and Buckinghamshire Building Society, which pays 5.80 per cent on deposits of £5,000 in its Chiltern Gold postal account.

Children's savings, 1015 section

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Floats keep banking shares buoyant

The retail banking sector continues to surf on a giant wave of positive investor sentiment, swollen by building society flotations and benign economic conditions. With the Halifax Building Society flotation just over a week away, City analysts have been upgrading their share price valuations while institutional investors have continued to pile into other bank stocks to rebalance their portfolios before the flotation.

Kleinwort Benson, the investment bank, reckons the country's biggest mortgage lender is now worth at least 600p a share, which would give it a capitalisation of £16.5 billion, representing 15 per cent of the total stock market. When Halifax first announced its intention to float in November 1994 it was valued at £10.2 billion.

Some analysts are even more bullish, valuing it at more than £17 billion, using Abbey National's prospective price-earnings ratio as a guide. The



unofficial "grey market" for Halifax shares put the price as high as 700p yesterday. Abbey's price has been artificially boosted in the past two months as institutions scramble to increase their bank sector weightings. The addition of the Halifax will increase the bank sector's slice of the stock market to nearly 16 per cent. As a result of this rush for bank

stocks, Abbey has seen its share price rocket from a March low of 714.5p to a high of 961p earlier this month. It has now drifted back slightly to 922p.

Institutions are concerned that not much Halifax stock will be available if a large proportion of customers decide to hold on to their windfalls. If lessons have been learnt from the Alliance & Leicester float, this is likely.

The bank sector as a whole has enjoyed a tremendous bull run over the past year, rising 63 per cent compared with 16 per cent for the FT-SE All-share index, according to Datastream, the financial data provider.

The bold move by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, to hand over interest rate decisions to the Bank of England coupled with a 0.25 per cent increase in base rates gave the sector another boost. Banks are perceived to be less risky investments in a low-inflation, stable economy where the risk of bad debt is much reduced. And with

sterling still strong, the sector is providing a haven for investors fleeing bruised manufacturers and exporters, such as British Steel. Profit warnings in other sectors — most notably biotech this week — contrast strongly with the confident banks.

Other financial stocks, such as insurance companies, are also doing well, thanks to flotations and takeover talk. This week Norwich Union, due to float on June 16, announced a bigger than expected average payout of at least £1.50 for each of its 1.8 million qualifying members. Norwich estimates that its shares will be offered at 240p-290p, an increase on its previous forecast of 220p-265p.

The announcement helped other insurance companies, particularly Legal & General, which rose strongly throughout the week to close at 463p yesterday.

MATTHEW WALL

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Nathan Yates looks at the resurgence of Japanese trusts

Dilemma over rally in Tokyo

Investors who have shunned UK and US markets for Japan have had reason to regret their choice. In contrast to an unprecedented surge in Anglo-American markets, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index has plummeted more than 38,000 points since 1993. But does the recent rally in Japanese prices mean that at last the tide is turning?

Over the past three weeks the Nikkei has risen more than 17 per cent, and there are some positive underlying indications. Last year Japan was the fastest growing of the G7 countries with a GDP growth of 3.7 per cent. Interest rates are below inflation at 0.5 per cent, and exporters have benefited from the yen's weakness against the dollar.

However, analysts and fund managers are divided on whether this glimmer of recovery will mature. Some believe that the deep-seated problems that caused Japan's fall from eminence in the 1980s have far from disappeared.

One of the most acute difficulties is the Japanese banking system. The boom in the late 1980s was fuelled by an inflation in property prices. When the bubble burst, banks were laden with bad debts, and over-regulated and inefficient Japanese institutions have found it difficult to cope.

Last month the Nippon Credit Bank, one of the top banks in Japan, had to be bailed out by a government-driven rescue programme after admitting \$11 billion in bad debts. The Hokkaido Takushoku Bank, Japan's



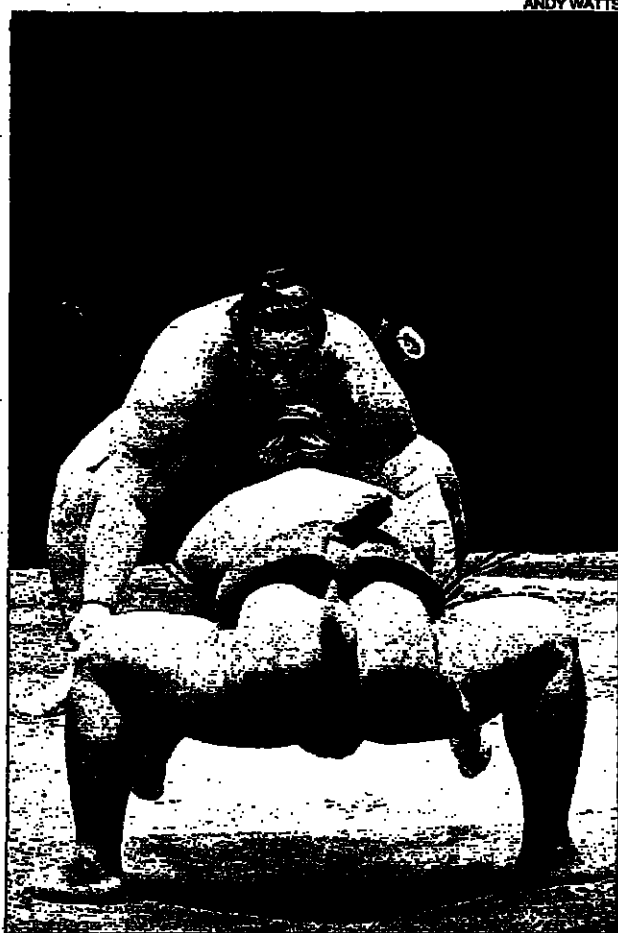
tenth largest commercial bank, was also forced into a merger. Some fear that any further pressure on Japan's financial institutions could prompt a series of collapses.

A "big bang" deregulation of the financial industry is under way, but bank shares are still regarded as poor value. Even fund managers with an upbeat view on Japan, such as Anne Marie Main of Hill Samuel, concede that restructuring in most companies is slow.

The Tokyo stock exchange is also faced with a Japanese reluctance to invest in equities. A series of false recoveries since 1991 have been inspired by demand from abroad, and have proved to be short lived. In addition, there are doubts over consumer activity, which could slump after a recent rise in taxes. Consumption tax, the Japanese equivalent of VAT, was raised from 3 per cent to 5 per cent on April 1.

The combination of these problems means a poor outlook for investors, according to Shahreza Yusuf, who manages Abtrust Japan. "We're not really keen on Japan at the moment," he said. "There are better growth opportunities elsewhere and, every time momentum builds in structural reform, the Government performs an about-turn."

Mr Yusuf's pessimism is sup-



Heavyweight economy: Japan is bouncing back again

ported in the recent performance of Japanese unit and investment trusts. Over the past year, even the top five funds have registered negative returns of between -6.51 per cent and -16.02 per cent. A sum of £100 invested would have shrunk to between £93.49 and £83.98.

However, expert opinion is split, and many analysts are more bullish on Japan. One of these is Paul Donovan of UBS. "The banks are not in as bad a shape as some say. More than half are strong enough to withstand a rise in interest rates. The Japanese consumer is alive and well, and home demand for stocks and shares is beginning to grow. Restructuring will not happen overnight, but it is taking place,

and the recovery should continue," he said. UBS forecast that the Nikkei index will rise to between 22,000 and 23,000 points by the end of the year, and it believes GDP growth will be buoyant at 2.1 per cent.

Some fund managers share this optimism. Denis Clough, manager of the Schroder Tokyo trust, said: "We are holding to the view that the recovery will not fade this time."

Michael Ashbridge of Save & Prosper is more circumspect, but also sees scope for better performance. "The market should move ahead gently," he said.

BEST Investment says the pick of Japanese funds are Martin Currie Japan, Schroder Tokyo and GT Japan, though it adds that all Japanese funds have performed poorly of late.

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The M&G Windfall PEP

Sara McConnell reports on tardy business by pension providers

Really disgusted in Tunbridge Wells



The vast majority of pensioners are losing their chance to secure the best annuity rates because of administrative delays, it has emerged.

Holders of personal pensions have the right to take their pension fund elsewhere to buy an annuity if another insurer is offering a better deal. Under current rules 75 per cent of the pension fund has to be used to buy an annuity. But insurers are taking so long to complete the necessary paperwork that the top annuity rates are being withdrawn before people can lock themselves in.

Independent financial advisers say it is the exception rather than the rule for insurers to complete the paperwork within the normal offer period of 14 days.

This has infuriated Weekend Money readers, including David Wade, of Tunbridge Wells. He writes:

"In November my wife decided to take her small private pension. The fund was with Allied Dunbar, but the best provider at the time was Norwich Union. Its offer was open for two weeks. By the time Allied Dunbar had completed the annuity transfer papers, the deadline was past and NU was now way down the list. This happened twice more. The last with an application to Legal & General whose offer stood for 18 days. Luckily when that expired its new rate was a fraction higher.

"Success? Oh, no. L&G then sent the papers back because Allied Dunbar had failed to stamp them. There was apparently nothing to indicate that it should do so. Three months on my wife is just about to get some money. Meanwhile the fund has been idle.

"In her case Allied Dunbar just happened to be the pro-

crastinators, but our financial adviser who coped with this says he has only once in years known any company to complete the transfer paperwork within the deadline. Either these people are working in their sleep or their deadlines are too short or both."

Weekend Money replies: Given the present poor reputation of insurance companies it would be tempting to suggest that they are deliberately delaying transfers in order to keep people's money for annuities. But this is not the case. Some companies are just not interested in being active in the annuity market. So the delays are administrative.

Billy Burrows, of Annuity Direct, the specialist adviser, says it is like "constantly banging your head against a brick wall" dealing with insurers. Part of the problem is that the procedure for transferring funds is unnecessarily elaborate and complex. There are three main stages:

■ You have to get the company with your pension fund (the pension provider) to send you a vesting or discharge form. This will tell you what your pension fund is worth and what annuity rate is on offer from the pension provider.

■ If you have found a better rate elsewhere, you have to send the vesting form back to your existing pension provider with the name of the company you have chosen to pay your annuity (the annuity provider). You will normally have to send back your policy documents and birth certificate as well.

■ If you have a personal pension, the forms have to be countersigned by the annuity provider.

All this has to be done within 14 days. This is the



Three-month wait: David Wade could not get the papers in time

longest time most companies will hold annuity rates. Annuities are underpinned by gilts, the yields of which are volatile and dependent on a number of factors, including interest rates. Currently, for example, rising interest rates have led to rising gilt prices and consequently falling gilt yields.

Obviously there is a lot of scope for administrative mistakes and delays. According to Mr Burrows, some companies are a lot better than others. "Allied Dunbar must have been having an off-day when it dealt with your wife's case as it is normally quite efficient. Other efficient companies in-

clude Equitable Life, NPI and Standard Life," he said. At the other end of the scale, many of the Scottish companies take 14 days just to send out the vesting form. Scottish Amicable is singled out as particularly slow.

Getting the best annuity rate is important. There is a big difference between the best and worst performers. So chase up your pension provider if it is being slow, and demand action. You will almost certainly have to arrange your annuity through a financial adviser as insurers generally will not deal directly with the public.

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To buy or not to buy

Helen Pridham
questions whether
it is still better
to delay buying
an annuity to
get a better rate

For holders of personal pension drawings near to retirement, one of the most interesting developments in recent years has been the introduction of the pension fund withdrawal option in 1995. This has allowed investors with sufficient resources at retirement to take an income direct from their fund, within certain limits, instead of having to buy a regular pension.

A big attraction of this option was that it meant investors were no longer forced to lock into annuity rates when they were at low levels. By delaying, there was the chance that they could time their annuity purchase when rates were higher.

However, there are growing doubts that annuity rates will ever return to the high levels of the past now that the Bank of England is controlling interest rates. This raises the question of whether postponing the purchase of an annuity is a good idea after all.

Under pension fund withdrawal rules, an annuity purchase can be deferred as late as age 75. But Billy Burrows of Annuity Direct, a firm of financial advisers specialising in annuities, argues that anyone of 65 or over should think twice about delaying their annuity purchase. He says: "If anything, annuity rates are likely to move lower if there is lower inflation. At the same time people are living longer so insurers will have to reduce their rates to reflect the fact that they are paying out for longer."

By delaying annuity purchase, Mr Burrows believes that investors also miss out on other benefits. "A healthy person effectively gets an enhanced



Annuity winners: healthy people get better returns because those who die early subsidise those who live longer

return from an annuity because annuity rates are based on average life expectancies - so those who die early subsidise those who live longer. But this effect diminishes the older you get. If you delay you forfeit the annuity income you would have received in the meantime. All other things being equal, people of normal pensionable age or older are highly unlikely to be better off as a result of delaying. They need strong reasons not to buy an annuity."

Peter Quinton of the Annuity Bureau, another firm of annuity advisers, agrees that the primary aim of anyone considering the pension fund withdrawal route should not be to achieve a larger pension unless they are relatively young and do not need to take a maximum income in the drawdown period.

Without any increase in annuity rates the only way a larger pension can be produced by delaying annuity purchase is if your fund produces a greater total return, both in terms of

capital appreciation and income than would have been produced by a conventional annuity. Simon Philip of Binder Hamlyn, the accountants, explains: "To the implicit return within an annuity, currently in the region of 7 to 7.5 per cent must be added the costs of investment management, plan charges and adviser fees. This suggests a minimum return of about 10 per cent is required for income withdrawal to break even with an annuity."

To produce an annual return of this amount, it is likely that the fund will need to be invested almost entirely in equities, which commits the pensioner to a considerable level of investment risk. "This is a risk that many drawing benefits will not be prepared to accept," says Mr Philip. However, for those who take early retirement in their fifties and would get lower annuity rates, pension fund withdrawal may be more feasible.

The returns required to match the annuity would be lower and the investment period would be longer so the possibility of out-performance would be improved. There are other situations where advisers believe pension fund withdrawal is also worth considering. "It is best suited to those who do not need to take the maximum permitted income," says Mr Quinton. For example, someone who has retired early and is still doing part-time work or has other sources of pension but would like to take the lump sum.

Mr Quinton says: "The main reason many people want to use income drawdown is so that money may be passed back to dependants if they die." Once you buy a conventional annuity this is not possible: your spouse may continue to receive a pension after your death but your dependants will have no access to the capital in your fund. Under income withdrawal, if you die before buying an

annuity, the remaining fund can be paid to your dependants, though it will be subject to 35 per cent tax.

Another way of passing on any remaining pension fund is by opting for phased retirement. With this method, part of your fund is used to buy an annuity each year. You don't get the benefit of the whole tax-free lump sum when you retire but any remaining capital can be paid to dependants free of tax on your death.

Deciding on the right course of action at retirement is not easy. It is essential to take professional advice. Bill Donaldson, marketing director of Scottish Mutual, the insurer, said: "Many people nowadays have several different pensions when they reach retirement. Tying these together and working out the best route is complicated." If you opt for income drawdown you must consult your adviser regularly thereafter about the investment performance of your fund.

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New retirement trust evades the CGT trap

Investment trusts have never been a popular tool for retirement planning even though they offer better long-term performance than unit trusts and with-profits funds and charge less in fees. This is because investors who sell their money away from a trust can face a huge capital gains tax bill when they try to convert their assets into regular income.

In addition, investment trusts' share prices are prone to wild fluctuations and frequently trade at a discount to net asset value. This is bad news for investors because it means the share price is failing to represent the underlying value of the trust's assets. The average discount in the sector has widened by a third, to 12 per cent, in the past 12 months, increasing the complexity and risk of investment. This has also led many financial advisers to recommend these trusts.

Merrill Asset Management hopes to change all this with the launch of its Retirement Trust next month. It effectively combines two funds in one, both managed by MAM's pension fund managers. Investors are offered two classes of shares: growth and monthly dividend. The growth shares are designed for people saving for a lump sum for retirement, while the monthly dividend shares are

for retirees who need a regular income from savings.

The yield will start at 4 per cent per annum but is designed to increase every year. The idea is for investors to start switching from the first class of share to the second around the time they stop work. This conversion occurs within the trust and does not give rise to a taxable capital gain. In addition, the switch is based on the net asset values of the shares, which avoids problems with the share price.

HOR MISS

For example, if you had 100 growth shares that grew to £15 in net asset value you would have £1,500. If the monthly dividend shares had a value of £13, you would be able to switch into £15 of them but the switch can only happen in February and August of any one year.

Simon Philip of Binder Hamlyn welcomed the trust's flexibility. "The big problem of investing in equities comes when you want to re-orient your capital into income and you get taxed for capital gains."

That won't happen in this trust. It also allows you to get at your wealth without stopping the pension plan. If you need some money you just sell some shares."

However, Mark Dampier, investment director of Churchill Investments, the independent financial adviser, says investors can achieve the same thing with existing income and growth funds such as Perpetual Income. Although not designed to grow substantially, investors could reinvest the fund's 3 per cent yield for extra capital growth until the time they needed to take the income.

In spite of its innovations, Retirement Trust is destined to be a fringe product for most people. Its complete reliance on the stock market makes it unsuitable as the sole retirement vehicle. Lough Callahan, managing director of Mercury Investment Trusts, says it is designed to work alongside a company or personal pension.

MAM expects to sell shares in the trust in the first two weeks of July. Minimum investment will be £3,000. After this, investors will be able to access it via its Pep and savings scheme.

Score: ★★★
Products graded from ★ (poor), to ★★★★★ (outstanding).

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Adam Jones on an ingenious campaign for compensation

Small claims beat system

LITIGATION against tobacco companies in the US has highlighted the relative lack of opportunity for UK plaintiffs to fight alongside each other in court. American tobacco manufacturers are defending "class actions" brought by thousands of smokers. The plaintiffs, who may not even have had to sign up to the action at its inception, are bound by one ruling and benefit from sharing the lawyers' fees, which are often levied only in the event of a victory.

It's much more difficult and expensive to collaborate like this in UK courts. Similar cases going through the courts at the same time are sometimes grouped together, as has happened in actions involving Lloyd's of London names, but each litigant must generally start individual and costly legal action themselves. Those with determination and ingenuity, however, can overcome these limitations and find something approaching cheap, collective action. The case of the Sound Diffusion Action Group is a textbook example.

Sound Diffusion was a company that mainly leased out televisions, intercom systems and other electrical equipment to hotels and businesses. The business, based in Brighton, boosted its cash flow by selling the right to collect rental income from its long-term leases to banks. The strategy led to impressive profit growth.

Then the long leases began to expire against the company. Maintenance costs escalated and new accounting rules meant its leasing contracts suddenly seemed less lucrative. The share price collapsed. In an attempt to kindle some sort of recovery, the company raised £9.5 million through the issue of convertible preference shares, organised by Kleinwort Benson, in April 1988.

The public took up a large proportion, attracted by an upbeat message in the rights issue prospectus. But eight months later, the company went into liquidation with net debts estimated at almost £90 million.

An action group was set up by some of the 11,000 shareholders. The ensuing campaign for compensation has now been deemed remarkable enough to warrant academic study. Professor Prem Sikka,

the University of Essex's controversial accounting academic, is soon to present a paper on the topic. But the renewed interest does not mean the campaign had an entirely happy ending.

The action group decided early on that it would not just raise money and hire lawyers to fight the shareholders' corner. Duncan Alexander, a full-time investor who became an active member, says this was a result of having been burnt once already by the City establishment.

"We didn't really feel terribly confident about paying another group of so-called professionals to represent our case," he says.

As a result, skills were pooled from within the action group, which included insolvency experts, housewives, accountants and pensioners. In all, there were about 500 group members.

The first task was to lobby the Department of Trade and Industry for an inquiry, which was duly held. The DTI report found that the rights issue documents were misleading. It also criticised Ernst & Whinney and Arthur Young, two accounting and auditing companies that now trade as Ernst & Young, for failing to identify serious defects in



Cost of thousands: Jane and Duncan Alexander fought on when the law failed investors

Sound Diffusion's accounting practices.

As a result of the wrong evaluation of the lease values, Sound Diffusion's balance sheet at the end of 1987, audited by Arthur Young, was so overstated that net assets shown as £17.8 million were in fact net liabilities.

The report, however, was not followed by punitive action from the DTI or other regulators. The action group members were not able to follow the example of Tunstall, a company which lost £1.9 million on the rights issue and sued Arthur Young. They could not afford to go to court individually and were otherwise stymied by the lack of a US-style class action facility.

Legal action over alleged auditing negligence seemed costly and futile once the House of Lords made a binding ruling in another case that auditors did not owe a duty of care to investors.

There was a chance that

Arthur Young could be sued in its role as "reporting accountant" instead of auditor, using the Financial Services Act 1986. To avoid big legal bills, cases could be taken through the small claims court, where costs were low and the maximum payout had been raised from £300 to £1,000.

However, there was a catch with the small claims action. It would only cover the preference shares bought by investors in the rights issue. Ordinary shares, generally the bulk component of a holding, would not be covered.

Jane Alexander, Mr Alexander's sister, started an action in the small claims court that would prove to be a test case for many others, even though she was not a member of the action group. She sued for the return of the £128 plus interest spent on preference shares in the rights issue. Ernst & Young's solicitors made a last-

minute offer covering the whole sum, but Miss Alexander held on to get the vital court ruling that could be brandished in other cases. When it was decided in her favour, other members were advised to follow the same course, in spite of a warning from the solicitors that she would be sued for libel.

Her brother estimates that 4,000 started actions, carefully within the £1,000 small claims maximum, raised to £3,000 after the campaign. Many had never had cause to visit a court in their lives. Sometimes, the threat of action was enough to secure a full *ex-gratia* payment, as in the case of a blind, house-bound 80-year-old man who would not have been able to appear in court.

Mr Alexander received out-of-court compensation, totalling £1,600, plus £1,000 interest for his own preference shares and another £1,600 for shares held through a family company. His holdings in the company amounted to £25,000 when it crashed, the great majority of which was lost.

He estimates that roughly £4 million may have been secured in compensation from what used to be Arthur Young, although further actions were halted by the six-year time limit on litigation. Ernst & Young says the undisclosed figure is much smaller.

Mr Alexander says: "The legal system exists for the very rich or the very poor. The vast majority of us who happen to be in the middle can't really use it effectively."

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مكة امنه الأصل

Nigel Griffiths, Minister for Consumer Affairs, last week opened the debate on the great divide that exists in British society and its financial services industry.

In an exclusive interview with *The Times* he gave warning to the so-called "home credit" companies that their market was under review by the new Labour administration.

Each week home credit companies send out droves of commission-driven agents into the country's council and housing estates arranging exorbitant loans to the unemployed and people on low incomes.

This is a large, vulnerable and largely captive market, for in Britain today there are four million people who cannot get loans from banks and building societies and who have to rely on the likes of Provident Financial, Cattle, S&B and London Scottish Bank to provide them with cash for day-to-day needs.

These quoted companies are the best known weekly lenders but there are nearly 1,200 smaller operators without their economies of scale levying truly frightening charges on their paltry loans.

To make matters worse borrowers are frequently encouraged by agents on 10 per cent commission to take out a new loan when they are weeks away from finishing a first. By rolling the original loan over into the new one, the borrowers end up paying interest on their interest and annual percentage rates (APRs) rocket to 500 per cent, compared with 23 per cent from banks.

The APR is the standard used to compare loans. Home credit companies complain that the APR is deeply flawed and distorts the true cost of their loans. They rightly point out that banks do not have to

Easy terms — at 353%



Nowhere to turn: Stuart Lee-Haigh with daughter Lisa-Marie

include their overdraft charges or the cost of letters in their APR. Although a £100 bank overdraft could incur £82 charges over 26 weeks, banks can get away with publishing a 23.2 per cent APR. Whatever

take his wife, who was dying of cancer, on holiday. The couple's local church collected money to send them to Bridlington, but Mr Lee-Haigh needed more to buy his three children meals and treats. He borrowed £150 from Provident Financial.

"I found out about Provident Financial's loans after I bought some pots and pans from one of their agents. I was too upset about Mary's health to really think about the interest rate and when I did finally take it in I thought it must be a misprint." The APR he saw was 353.9 per cent.

Over the next 20 weeks he paid £195, £45 more than the original loan.

"I've continued to borrow money from them because I don't have anywhere else to turn," Mr Lee-Haigh added. He is currently paying out 287.7 per cent APR on another £200 loan from Provident which he needed for more holiday expenses after he got a free place on a holiday arranged by his local pub. Over five months he will pay a total of £260 to his agent.

A spokesman for Provident Financial could not comment on Mr Lee-Haigh's case.

The credit lenders insist that they are providing a valuable service to their customers. John van Kuffeler, chairman of Provident Financial, said: "These are not extraordinarily high charges for a small loan. For each £100 we lend out we have to create a file, put it on the computer system, send round an agent 53 times to collect the money and have a supervisor managing the agents."

Edward Cran, the chief executive of Cattle, said: "These are the people who will not repay anyone unless they come along and pick it up."

GAVIN LUMSDEN

Halifax soothes deadline fears



As the Building Societies Commission gave its final go-ahead for the Halifax's June 2 conversion, the society moved to reassure members that Monday's deadline for receipt of share registration forms is not final.

To enter the initial auction of shares to institutional investors, members must post

their forms today. But late respondents can take advantage of the Halifax free dealing service for 10 days after flotation, and separate share auctions will be held for 20 days in all.

Members who miss the deadline by a greater margin can also be sure of a windfall. Unclaimed shares will be held for three years in trust before being sold, and the proceeds from the sale can be obtained for a further nine years.

"Our message is, if you miss the deadline there is no need to panic," Halifax said. "Monday only matters if you are determined to sell your shares straight away."

The move to reassure members follows reports this week that the Royal Bank of Scotland, which is handling the Halifax's shareholder registration process, is expecting a last-minute flood of forms at its giant registration plant near Bristol. Those among the 7.6 million beneficiaries who complained about the 31-month delay between the announcement of the conversion plans in November 1994 and payout day may now be realising that time has been

on their side. Yesterday, as the Building Societies Commission gave its final go-ahead for the conversion of the society, the unofficial "grey" market put a price of 700p on the shares. This compares with the 415p "floor" price. (If there is market fallout when dealings begin on June 2, sellers are guaranteed to receive no less than the floor price.)

The 700p estimate means that a Halifax customer with the maximum allocation of 1,381 shares would be sitting on a paper profit of £9,667. Once the Halifax becomes a bank, the Nationwide will become the country's largest building society. The Nationwide's commitment to its mutual status has been well publicised, to the chagrin of those who had opened accounts in the hope of a windfall.

However, the Nationwide this week conceded that if the conversion enthusiasts currently attempting to win places on its board succeed in their attempt, then its mutual days might be numbered.

ANNE ASHWORTH AND NATHAN YATES

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Copies of the Prospectus dated 12 February 1997 which contains full details of the issue and the securities being offered, or Mini-Prospectus relating to the Company, which was published on 12 February 1997, can be obtained by calling 0800 854 057, or during normal business hours on any weekday (Saturdays and public holidays excepted) from:

Beeson Gregory Limited The Registry Royal Mint Court London EC3N 4EY Regulated by The Securities and Futures Authority Limited	Yorkshire Fund Managers Ltd St Martins House 210-212 Chapeltown Road Leeds LS7 4HZ Regulated by Investment Management Regulatory Organisation Limited	Equity Ventures Du Pont House Bristol Business Pk Bristol BS16 1QD Regulated by The Securities and Futures Authority Limited	Downing Corporate Finance Limited 69 Eccleston Square London SW1V 1PJ Regulated by The Securities and Futures Authority Limited
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GUIDE TO THE APPLICATION FORM

Notes on how to complete the Application Form

ALL APPLICANTS SHOULD READ NOTES 1 TO 5 BELOW

1. Fill in (in figures) in Box 1 the number of Ordinary Shares for which you wish to apply.

Each Ordinary share costs £1.

Your application must be for a minimum of 2,000 Ordinary shares. Applications for greater amounts must be in multiples of 1,000. Applications for any other number or multiples of Ordinary shares may be rejected or treated as applications for the next smaller number of Ordinary shares that complies with the requirements of this Paragraph.

THE INVESTMENT WILL BE IN THE INCOME TAX YEAR 1997/98. THE MAXIMUM INVESTMENT ON WHICH THE RELIEFS ARE AVAILABLE IS £100,000 IN EACH TAX YEAR ASSUMING NO OTHER INVESTMENT IN A VCT HAS BEEN MADE IN THAT YEAR.

2. Fill in (in figures) in Box 2 the amount you are paying. This should be the number of Ordinary shares applied for in Box 1 multiplied by £1 (e.g. for 5,000 Ordinary shares pay £5,000).

3. Affix a cheque or banker's draft at Box 3 for the exact amount shown in Box 2. Your cheque or banker's draft must be payable to "Northern Registrars Limited A/C British Smaller Companies VCT plc" and crossed "A/C Payee only". No receipt will be issued.

Share certificates will be despatched by 10 June 1997 together with an "enduring declaration" containing details required by the Inland Revenue which must be completed by investors and returned in order to obtain income tax relief on dividends.

Your cheque or banker's draft must be drawn in sterling on an account at a branch of a bank or building society in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man and must bear the appropriate sorting code in the top right-hand corner. An Application Form may be accompanied by a cheque or banker's draft drawn by someone other than the applicant, but any moneys returned will be sent by cheque crossed "A/C Payee" in favour of the applicant.

4. Insert your full name and permanent address in BLOCK CAPITALS in Box 4. Applications may only be made by persons aged 18 or over. Tax reliefs are not available to persons aged under 18.

5. The applicant named in Box 4 must date and sign Box 5. Individuals can only apply on their own behalf and in their own name. A nominee name should not be used as this will prejudice your entitlements for tax reliefs. A corporation should sign under the hand of a duly authorised official, whose representative capacity must be stated.

Commissions will be paid to authorised financial intermediaries on applications accepted under the Offers in respect of Application Forms bearing their stamp and SIB or SRO membership number at a rate of 3 per cent.

APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY 10.00 AM 30TH MAY

APPLICATION FORM - BRITISH SMALLER COMPANIES VCT plc

PLEASE

- Read the notes on how to complete the form. Applications must be for a minimum of 2,000 Ordinary shares. Applications for greater amounts must be in multiples of 1,000.
- Use BLOCK CAPITALS
- Make your cheque or banker's draft payable to "Northern Registrars Limited A/C British Smaller Companies VCT plc" and crossed "A/C Payee only" and return this form so as to arrive no later than 10.00 a.m. on 30 May 1997 to Northern Registrars Limited. Please note that the application list may be closed at any time before 10.00 a.m. on 30 May 1997, provided that the Offers have been subscribed in full.

1 I apply for Ordinary shares

(or any smaller number of Ordinary shares for which this application is accepted) at the offer price of 100p per Ordinary share, payable in full on application, on the terms and conditions set out in the Application Form and the prospectus dated 12 February 1997 and subject to the Memorandum and Articles of Association of British Smaller Companies VCT plc

2 I attach a cheque or banker's draft for the amount payable. This should be the number of Ordinary shares shown in Box 1 multiplied by £1.

£

3 Please staple or pin your cheque or banker's draft here.

4 Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms or title

Surname

Forename(s) (in full)

Permanent address

Postcode

5

Signature

Date

Completed Application Forms should be sent by post or delivered by hand to:

Northern Registrars Limited,
Penistone Road, Fenay Bridge, Huddersfield HD8 0LA
so as to arrive no later than 10.00 am on 30 May 1997.

Please note, however, that the application list may be closed at any time before 10.00 am on 30 May 1997, provided that the Offers have been subscribed in full.

24 May 1997

NEWS DIEST

- **DEALINGS** began in the shares of Colonial, the Australian insurer, Colonial's 255,000 UK policyholders will receive £1.30 for their shares (page 32). AMP, another Australian insurer, is also progressing with demutualisation plans, but UK policyholders with Pearl and London Life will not benefit. The Abbey National raised its savings rates by up to 0.30 per cent (page 34).
- **THE** Chancellor of the Exchequer announced wide-ranging reforms of the system for investor protection. The subsidiary watchdog bodies that provide over various sections of the financial services industry will be replaced with a single organisation, a more powerful version of the Securities and Investments Board (page 31).
- **NATIONAL SAVINGS** cut the odds on winning any Premium Bond prize, including the £1 million jackpot to 1 in 19,000 from June (page 42). National Savings has raised the rate of interest on its First Option Bond by 0.25 per cent.
- **NORWICH UNION**, which will be distributing £2.5 billion of free shares to policyholders, announced that those customers who wish to buy further shares will receive a 25p discount (page 32).
- **THE** Nationwide Building Society said it might reconsider its commitment to mutualism if rebel members are elected to its board.
- **FOLLOWING** a routine inspection at the Prudential, the SIB raised four issues relating to pensions, training, selling practices and the Prudential Savings Account.
- **TITAN**, the illegal money-making scheme, is planning to re-establish itself in the UK. It will try to contact investors on the Internet.
- **MOTORISTS** were warned by the Department of Trade and Industry that anyone with an Eastern Star or SOS Insurance policy is driving uninsured.
- **THE** Halifax Building Society received the final go-ahead for its conversion from the Building Societies Commission.
- **ON** the need for holiday-makers to be properly advised on travel insurance, Walter Merricks, the Insurance Ombudsman, said: "Travellers should also realise that their policies do not cover every misfortune that befalls them."

Entitled to explanation from the Halifax

From Miss S. M. Nicholls
Sir, I was interested to read the item concerning Penelope McWaters and her treatment by the Halifax. I, too, was given the wrong information at my local branch when my mother died on February 9, 1995. At the time of her death my mother had almost £21,000 invested with the society. I asked on three separate occasions for clarification of my share entitlement as I was the sole heir to the estate. At first they could not answer the question, but finally I was told that I had no entitlement. The right had died with my mother. I therefore moved the money elsewhere for a better return. However, when I saw the transfer document it was clear that I had not been given the wrong information and I had left the money with the Halifax. I would have been entitled to about 600 shares.

I wrote to the Society in January complaining about this situation. By March I had not even had an acknowledgement so I wrote to David Gilchrist. I then received a letter from the Conversion Programme Manager stating that "I did not meet the qualifying criteria". I replied on March 17, 1997, that the reason was because of wrong information given to me by a member of staff and that prior to this I would have met the criteria. I asked for an explanation regarding this particular complaint. To date, I have not had a reply. It would seem that Halifax is choosing to take no responsibility for the fact that people have been deprived of their rights because of mistakes by, and misinformation from, members of their staff.

Yours faithfully,
S. NICHOLLS,
27 Borough Park,
Torpoint, Cornwall.

Origin of the anomalies over services pensions

From Mr H. C. Leivers
Sir, Further to the letters regarding war widows' pensions (Slabby treatment of service widows, May 10), may I be allowed to make the following observation? The anomalies complained of (with justification) are a direct result of the 1973 Social Security Act.

The Act sought the portability of pensions. It would seem that, in the drafting of this Act, the powers that be forgot (or failed to recognise) the fact that a lot of services personnel would not serve a "full pensionable engagement". This failure results in those who left the Services not having completed the requisite time, and who left before April 1975, in having no pension rights at all for the period served in the forces.

This effectively removes from the Forces Pension Scheme all National Servicemen who did not become Regulars, in addition to all those who, like myself, were Regulars but did not serve the full 22 years.

This means that in my particular case, having served my country and sovereign directly via the medium of the

Contrary communications

Sorry for the delay...
the old system is generally the more reliable



From Mr T. E. Beckett
Sir, May I question, via your apposite correspondence, why it takes the Bank of Scotland five days to transfer a Giro cheque from Edinburgh to Plymouth, whereas first class post takes a mere 14 hours? Incidentally, am I exceptional in preferring promptitude to a phone call being answered with the familiar "Suzanne here, how may I help?" now universally adopted by banks and others, though a second call reveals that Suzanne has been replaced by Angela or William; shades of new Labour at Cabinet level?

Yours faithfully,
THOMAS BECKETT,
9 Old Mill Court, Plympton, Plymouth.

Classic case of the missing 2p

From Mrs H. Woolner
Sir, I have a Lloyds Bank Classic (current) account, to which net interest is credited monthly. The monthly statements also show the gross interest and income tax deducted.

According to the statements, during the tax year 1996-97, Lloyds deducted 26p income tax (£1.33 gross) and paid me £1.07 net.

However, the annual interest summary Lloyds has just sent me for my tax return shows income tax deducted of 24p (from £1.33 gross) and net interest paid of £1.09.

I do not mind too much about losing my 2p, but where has it gone? Does the Inspector of Taxes mind losing his 2p, and what has Lloyds actually done with all the 2ps it has withheld?

Yours faithfully,
H. WOOLNER,
Maltmans End,
Gerrards Cross,
Buckinghamshire.

Loser pays penalty for lost post

From Ms D. Bradley
Sir, I agree entirely with Mr Sharples (letter, May 17). I am required to pay a total of £40.20 for a replacement certificate for a bonus issue certificate which was lost in the post on its way to me. I do not understand why they cannot cancel the missing certificate, whose serial number they ought to have, and issue a replacement certificate, without requiring me to pay £22.50 for an indemnity guarantee.

Yours faithfully,
DIANA BRADLEY,
6 Ariel Court,
Ashchurch Park Villas,
London W12.

■ Letters to Weekend Money are welcomed, but *The Times* regrets that it cannot give individual replies or advice. No legal responsibility can be accepted for advice or statements given in these columns and independent professional advice should be sought over all investment matters. Letters to Weekend Money can be sent by fax on 0171-782 5082.

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BALANCE	ANNUAL % GROSS
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£5,000-£9,999	6.75%
£10,000-£24,999	6.75%
£25,000-£49,999	6.75%
£50,000-£99,999	6.75%
£100,000+	6.75%
MORTGAGE RATE	
Direct Line Standard Variable Mortgage Rate	
VARIABLE RATE	APR
6.50%	6.50%

All rates correct as 23rd May 1997.



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MORTGAGES

0181 667 1121
SAVINGS

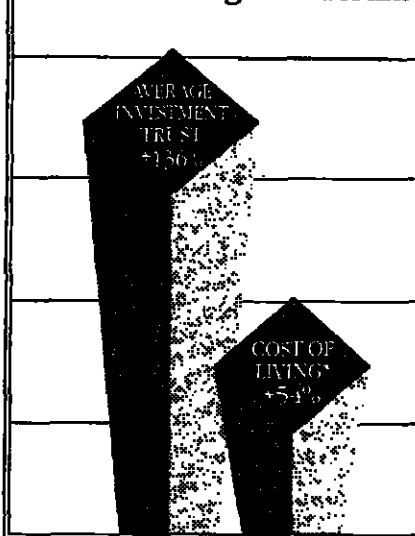
Source: Direct Line Financial Services. For further information about either of the Direct Line products listed above, please phone the appropriate number above quoting ref. TTB86

Mortgages and savings provided by Direct Line Financial Services Limited, 250 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5SR. For savings the gross rate is the net paid without deduction of income tax and is based on annual payments of interest. For mortgages the interest rate is the rate of the loan and security in the form of a first legal charge (Standard Security - Scotland) over the property will be required. Direct Line mortgages from £25,000 to £250,000 are available for up to 10% of the property value or purchase price, whichever is the lower. Where questions arise on request. Offers subject to credit. All rates quoted above are variable.

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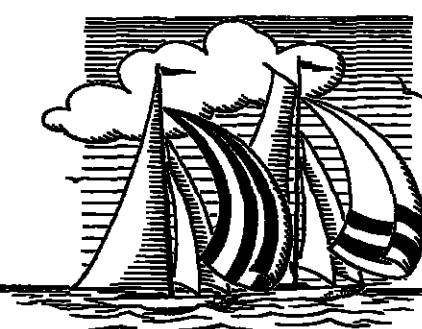
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£100,000 +	6.70%	6.50%	6.70%
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£25,000 +	6.55%	6.36%	6.55%
£10,000 +	6.50%	6.31%	6.50%

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Postcode

Tel (Office)

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Date of Birth

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Caroline Merrell on moves marking a special Bond anniversary

Odds get easier as Ernie reaches 40



Forty years on: Bill Haley and his Comets rock around the clock in 1957 London, the year Premium Bonds launched

Ernie becomes middle-aged in June. However, he is celebrating the beginning of his fifth decade with a change to the odds on winning a prize on the Premium Bonds. From next month, the odds will shorten to 1 in 19,000, and will be fixed.

Previously, the chances of winning varied on a month-by-month basis according to the number of people holding Premium Bonds. The more bonds in issue, the longer the odds on winning. In May, the odds on winning were about 1 in 23,000. Next month, with the shortened odds in place, National Savings will pay out 430,000 tax-free prizes worth £32 million. Among the prizes will be one £1 million prize, five £100,000 prizes, eight £50,000 prizes and 19 prizes worth £25,000 each.

Premium Bonds look particularly attractive at the moment because inflation rates and interest rates are low, which means that even if Premium Bond savers do not win, their investment will not be eroded too swiftly by inflation.

Low interest rates mean that Premium Bond savers are in fact only gambling the interest they would have earned on their investments. In its 40-year history, National Savings Premium Bonds have paid out more than 57 million prizes worth £3.5 billion in total.

Those looking forward to getting a windfall from one of the forthcoming building society conversions could considerably shorten the odds of winning by investing all their payout in bonds. Those who invest £1,000, a typical wind-

fall, in Premium Bonds have a 1 in 20 chance of winning any prize. The odds on winning a prize in the Premium Bond draw compare well with chances of winning the National Lottery jackpot, where the odds are 1 in 14 million.

However, the maximum that can be won through the lottery is much greater than the maximum £1 million offered by National Savings. The biggest jackpot prize reached nearly £23 million. The chances of winning other, smaller, prizes in the lottery are about 1 in 54.

National Savings claims that since the introduction of the lottery more than two years ago, interest in all forms of low-risk gambling has increased, which means that interest in Premium Bonds has also increased dramatically.

As part of its 40-year celebrations, National Savings compared the costs of splashing out in 1957 with the costs of splashing out today (see below).

If you are lucky enough to win a prize in a Premium Bond draw, then National Savings will write to confirm the win. It is, therefore, important that National Savings is informed of any change of address, by either completing the holder's card issued at the same time as the bonds, or by writing directly to Premium Bonds, National Savings, FY3 9YF.

A list of winning numbers is available at main post offices two months after each draw, together with a complete list of unclaimed prizes every quarter.

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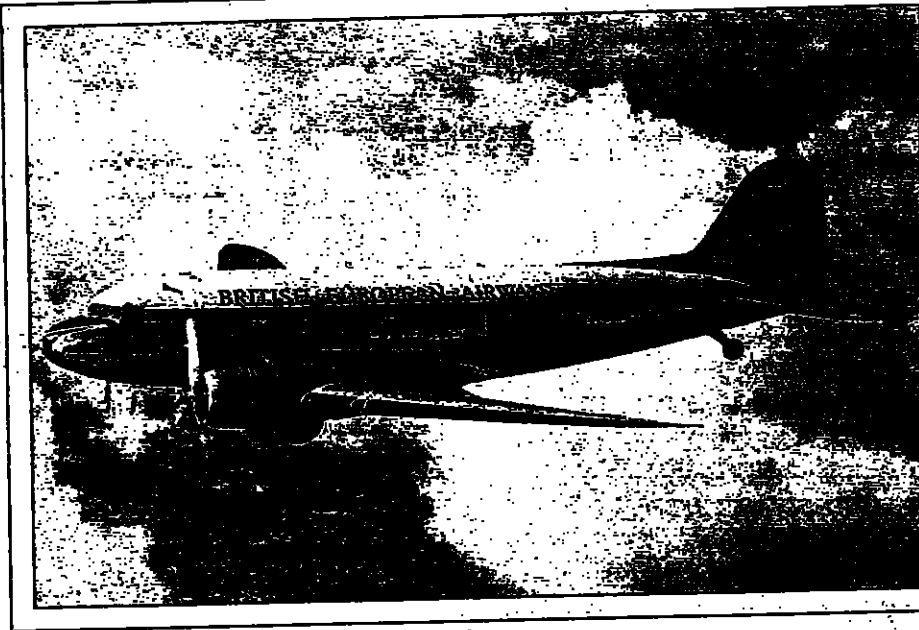
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Autif shows the way with windfalls

The Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds (Autif) has produced a guide for investors receiving free building society and insurance company shares.

The guide, aimed at the 16 million people who are due to benefit from the demutualisations of Halifax, Woolwich, Alliance & Leicester, Northern Rock, and Norwich Union, gives some advice about what to do with the windfall shares. It also lists those companies that are offering to exchange windfall shares for units in a general personal equity plan.

The guide points out that the charges and the details of the different share-exchange schemes vary, and advises the public to make sure that they shop around to ensure that they find the most suitable scheme.

The companies offering share-exchange schemes include Schroder, Virgin Direct and HSBC. Philip Warland, Autif's director-general, said: "This is a great opportunity for investors new to the stock market to take that all important first step on to the equity ladder. The key to success is in being clear in your objectives, realistic about your expectations and confident."

The guide is free to members of the public. Those wishing to receive a copy of the guide can write to the Unit Trust Information Service, 65 Kingsway, London WC2B 6TD. The telephone number is 0181 207 1361.

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[illegible][illegible]

44 EQUITY PRICES

Gilts end week with a rally

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1997					1997					1997					1997				
High	Low	Company	Price	%	High	Low	Company	Price	%	High	Low	Company	Price	%	High	Low	Company	Price	%
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
BANKS																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
BREWERIES, PUBS & REST																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
ELECTRICITY																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
ELECTRONIC & ELECT																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
ENGINEERING																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
ENGINEERING, VEHICLES																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
FOOD MANUFACTURERS																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
HEALTHCARE																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
HOUSEHOLD GOODS																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
INSURANCE																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
INVESTMENT TRUSTS																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
LEISURE & HOTELS																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
MINING																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
MOTOR VEHICLES																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
OIL & GAS																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
OTHER FINANCIAL																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
PHARMACEUTICALS																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
PRINTING & PAPER																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
PROPERTY																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
RETAILERS FOOD																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
RETAILERS GENERAL																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
SUPPORT SERVICES																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
TELECOMMUNICATIONS																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
TEXTILES & APPAREL																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
TRANSPORT																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
WATER																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
WINE & SPIRITS																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5
WORLDWIDE																			
105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5	105	104	Alfred Dunhill	104.5	-0.5

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GOLF: SWEDE WALKING TALL AFTER OPENING ROUND OF PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

Karlsson in Wentworth van

By JOHN HOPKINS
GOLF CORRESPONDENT

IT IS not cheap to move house these days and Robert Karlsson will be grateful for whatever share of the prize-money he can pick up from the Volvo PGA championship this weekend to finance the transportation of his possessions from Richmond, Surrey, down to Monte Carlo. He made a successful start to his money-making quest with a 67, five under par, in the first round at Wentworth yesterday.

The opening day of the European Tour's flagship event was one that perfectly summed up the state of professional golf in Great Britain in 1997. Play was slow, as it so often and too often is, and some rounds lasted nearly five hours. There were complaints from various players about the fierceness of the rough on the left of the 17th. The players do whinge too much and, besides, are they the best judges? I watched 11 competitors drive on this hole. Five kept their drives in the tilting fairway and six missed it by varying margins.

What demonstrated most precisely that this was 1997, was the presence of so many mobile phones. They were everywhere, yet they should be banned from such a pastoral place as a golf course. The most absurd sight of all was of Mark Mouland, who has selected

Scotland the Brave as the ringing tone of his telephone — a strange choice for a Welshman — practising on the range by hitting balls with his left hand while gripping his telephone with his right.

None of this worried Karlsson, a Swede, who was out at 7.20 and had finished before midday. He is one of a bunch of players on 67, which includes Bernhard Langer, David Gillford, Andrew Sherburne and Ian Woosnam. They are one stroke behind Eamonn Darcy, who represents something of a blast from the past, and Darren Clark, whom many would like to be a substantial figure in the future. Clark is enormously talented but two tournament victories in a six-year career as a professional do not represent the sort of dividend that was once thought likely from one so talented.

Golf is a game of yards, feet and inches, or metres and centimetres if you prefer it. The distances that matter are the ones a golfer hits a

ball from the tee, not the height he stands on it. In fact, the shorter the better. There have been very few good golfers of more than 6ft 2in. Nick Faldo, who had a 70 yesterday, is another tall man whose height sometimes causes him problems. At 6ft 5in, and willowy with it, Karlsson has a good build for a rugby or basketball player.

"Robert has short arms and a 37in inside leg. These are not the best measurements for a golfer," Simon Holmes, who has coached Karlsson in Europe and Florida since 1992, said. "With that sort of height you have to do a lot to get a consistent swing."

"There is a tendency to swing very steeply. We have been working very hard to make his swing shallower. Robert is very talented and a hard worker. He is determined not to fail because of a lack of effort."

"When we first started working together we decided that for him to get the ideal position at the address

he needed clubs with shafts that were three-and-a-half inches longer than usual. The manufacturers were not interested in that, so we ended up with clubs that are two inches longer than standard."

Karlsson had five birdies, taking advantage of the help he was given by the wind on the 9th and the 12th to birdie those two holes as well as the 6th, 11th and 14th before turning into the breeze as he played the last two holes. "It was my magic putter," Karlsson said. "That is what did it."

If Karlsson's putter was magic, how does one describe Paul Broadhurst's? He had 25 putts, six fewer than Karlsson, yet went round in 72, five strokes more. Unusual as that was, then what words are needed to describe Dean Robertson's round? Eccentric, unsteady, up and down, inconsistent? Against a par of 4, 3, 4, 5, 3, Robertson started 2, 5, 4, 3, 2 — or eagle, double bogey, par, eagle, birdie.

Robertson hit a five-iron into the hole from 185 yards at the 1st; a five-iron to five feet at the 4th and a five-iron to seven feet at the 5th. On the short second he hit what he thought was a good stroke with a seven-iron, only for the ball to soar over the back of the green. "I'm going to sleep with my five-iron tonight," Robertson said. "As for my putter, that will be dumped."

DETAILS FROM WENTWORTH

Great Britain and Ireland unless stated

EARLY LEADING FIRST-ROUND SCORES: 66: E Darcy, D Clarke; 67: R Karlsson (Swe), D Gillford, B Langer (Ger), A Sherburne, I Woosnam, 68: M Farny (Fru), T Dym (Ger), D Loner, F Noble (NZ), 69: E Els (SA), P Walton, S Lane, T Googhe (Ger), C Whieldaw (SA), C Montgomerie, T M Daves, N Faldo, V Singh (Fru), M A Martin (Sp), K Eriksson (Swe), P Hughes (Fru), L Westwood, S Arnes (Fru), P-U Johansson (Swe), C Rocca (It), J Parnwell

(Swe), D Edmund (Swe), D Borrego (Sp), 71: J Pizarro (Esp), D Smyth, S Larrance, S Sjöberg (Ger), E Romero (Arg), I Garbutt, S Field, I Pym, S Cope, G Emerson, 72: A Taylor, A Oldson, D Higgins, J M O'Sullivan (Sp), P Broadhurst, R Burns, C O'Connor, J W Raley (Aus), M Ross, P Atterick, D Robertson, D McGrane, B Hughes (Aus), J Sandhu (Ind), 73: P Hackett (Swe), M Gornberg (Swe), M Meredeth, C Mason, R Wilkins, R Gossain (SA), K Dickins, J Lomas, S Lums (Sp), R Alenby (Aus), A Bossert (Switz), J Rivero (Sp).



Faldo, who began his challenge with a round of 70, escapes from a bunker at the 3rd hole

Burton inspired by Woods defeat

By PATRICIA DAVIES

KIM ROSTRON, from Lancashire, will play Kate Burton, of Surrey and Florida State University, in the final of the English women's amateur championship at Saunton this morning.

Rostron, an England international, who has added 20 yards to her drives since acquiring a Mizuno T-Zoid driver *à la* Faldo and spending the winter in the gym, will be the favourite, but Burton's confidence, on the course where she played her first full round of golf as a 12-year-old on holiday with the family — she scored 140 — is blossoming.

She has also been inspired by the comeback of Gary Wolstenholme, conqueror of one Tiger Woods in the Walker Cup at Royal Portcullis two years ago. Burton caddied for Wolstenholme here last Sunday, when he scored 68 in the final round of the Brabazon Trophy, and she said: "He was hitting long irons and woods so close to the pin that it made me think that I should be able to hit it close, whether I was using a seven-iron or a five-wood."

Vitality, Burton's chipping and putting have been in good shape this week and she drew confidence from being four under par — the best golf of her life, she felt, and exactly half the total she posted on that childhood debut — when

she beat Caroline Grady, who was two under, in the first round.

Yesterday, on a chilly, forbidding morning, Burton defeated Georgina Simpson, of Yorkshire, and, in the afternoon, when conditions were brighter but still breezy, Burton, a bespectacled blonde from St George's Hill, always had the edge against Kerry Smith, from Watlingtonville. Smith, the English intermediate champion in 1995, had had her moment of glory when she recovered from two down after two holes to beat Karen Stupples, the Curtis Cup player from Royal Cinque Ports, at the 16th.

In the quarter-finals, Rostron, a perky Lancastrian, had run away from Kate Egdorf by winning four holes in a row from the 11th and, in the afternoon, she kept running. She was four up after six against Ratcliffe, who could never quite get back on level terms. Ratcliffe clawed her way back to one down after 14 holes, but lost the 15th to a superb birdie four and, although she won the 17th with a birdie two, Rostron made par at the last to win.

RESULTS: Quarter-finals: E Ratcliffe (Cardiff) bt R Hudson (Wrexham) 5 and 4; K Rostron (Lancaster) bt K Egdorf (Wrexham) 5 and 4; K Smith (Watlingtonville) bt K Simpson (Royal Cinque Ports) 3 and 2; K Burton (St George's Hill) bt G Simpson (Cardiff) and District 2 and 1; Seed-final: Rostron bt Ratcliffe 1 hole; Burton bt Smith 3 and 1.

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TOUGH ON PERSPIRATION EASY ON YOUR SKIN

Today	
CRICKET	
Tasaco Trophy one-day international 10.45, 50 overs	
THE OVAL: England v Australia	
Bathurst Assurance county championship 11.0, final day of four, 50 overs (rain)	
CHESTER-LE-STREET: Durham v Worcestershire	
CARDIFF: Glamorgan v Hampshire	
GLoucester: Gloucestershire v Essex	
OLD TRAFFORD: Lancashire v Northamptonshire	
LEICESTER: Leicestershire v Surrey	
TRENT BRIDGE: Nottinghamshire v Derbyshire	
TAUNTON: Somerset v Yorkshire	
HORSHAM: Sussex v Kent	
EDGBASTON: Warwickshire v Middlesex	
FOOTBALL	
International match	
England v South Africa (at Old Trafford, 6.0)	
Nationwide League	
Third division play-offs	
First	
Northampton v Swindon (at Wembley, 3.0)	
Tottenham Scottish Cup	
Final	
Falkirk v Kilmarnock (at Kilmarnock, Glasgow, 8.0)	
HOCKEY	
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL MATCH	
Scotland v United States (at National Stadium, Milton Keynes, 8.30)	
WOMEN'S ENGLISH VETERANS' CHAMPIONSHIP: City of Portsmouth, Ipswich, Oke (Gloucestershire), Tynes (Yorkshire), Wexham (Leam) (at National Stadium, Milton Keynes, 9.30)	
RUGBY LEAGUE	
BRIEF CLIP: National Junior play-off final	
Under-18: Ospreys v Scarlets (11.45)	
Under-16: Leisham v Walsley (11.15)	
National Cup: First, Dudley Hill v Ebbw Vale (8.30) (at St Helens)	
ALLIANCE CHAMPIONSHIP: Hull Kingston Rovers v Leeds	
RUGBY UNION	
Tour matches	
Buenos Aires v England XV (in Buenos Aires, 7.30)	
Eastern Province Invitational XV v British Isles XV (in Port Elizabeth, 2.15)	
Representative match	
Romania v Wales A (in Bucharest, 3.0)	
Sanyo Cup	
Wales v World XV (at Twickenham, 3.0)	
OTHER SPORT	
BADMINTON: World championships (in Glasgow)	
EQUESTRIANISM: Windsor Horse Trials	
CRICKET	
Tasaco Trophy one-day international 10.45, 50 overs	
LORD'S: England v Australia	
Ave Life League	
22, 40 overs	
CHESTER-LE-STREET: Durham v Worcestershire	
CARDIFF: Glamorgan v Hampshire	
GLoucester: Gloucestershire v Essex	
OLD TRAFFORD: Lancashire v Northamptonshire	
LEICESTER: Leicestershire v Surrey	
TRENT BRIDGE: Nottinghamshire v Derbyshire	
TAUNTON: Somerset v Yorkshire	
HORSHAM: Sussex v Kent	
EDGBASTON: Warwickshire v Middlesex	
MINOR COUNTIES CHAMPIONSHIP (first day of test; Ashes: Durham v Bedfordshire; Gloucestershire v Warwickshire; Shropshire v Herefordshire; Shropshire v Herefordshire; Shropshire v Herefordshire)	
FOOTBALL	
Nationwide League	
Second division play-offs	
First	
Barnford v Crewe (at Wembley, 3.0)	
HOCKEY	
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL MATCH	
England v United States (at National Stadium, Milton Keynes, 8.30)	
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GLoucester: Gloucestershire v Essex	
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LEICESTER: Leicestershire v Surrey	
TRENT BRIDGE: Nottinghamshire v Derbyshire	
TAUNTON: Somerset v Yorkshire	
HORSHAM: Sussex v Kent	
EDGBASTON: Warwickshire v Middlesex	
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BADMINTON: World championships (in Glasgow)	
EQUESTRIANISM: Windsor Horse Trials	

FOOTBALL: EXPERIENCE MAY PROVE DECISIVE AS SIX CLUBS PREPARE FOR PERILS OF THE PLAY-OFFS

Palace steeled by Wembley ordeal

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

WEMBLEY'S annual three-day festival of joy and anguish — more commonly known as the Football League play-off finals — gets underway this afternoon, when Northampton Town take on Swansea City to decide who will progress from the third division. Tomorrow, it is the turn of Brentford and Crewe Alexandra, from the second division, to face trial by torture, on Monday, Crystal Palace vie with Sheffield United for the honour of leaving the first division and entering the promised land of the FA Carling Premiership.

For the officials, players and supporters of the clubs concerned, it is a weekend of either undiluted pain or immeasurable ecstasy. For the neutral, though, it is often an intriguing spectacle that has comfortably retained its appeal since being introduced seven years ago. Watching footballers giving everything, in an effort to determine their immediate professional futures, holds a certain ghastly fascination.

Palace, more than most, can testify to the feeling of all-embracing emptiness after defeat in a Wembley play-off. Only last year, they were beaten 2-1 by Leicester City in the final minute of extra time, with Steve Claridge scoring the decisive goal.

"I can remember it well, but it's still difficult to describe your real emotions," Andy Roberts, who scored Palace's goal, said. "I felt like a lost soul afterwards. I didn't know what to do or where to go. I just hope it will help us to go on."

Andy Linighan, the Palace central defender, has fonder memories. On his last visit to the stadium, in 1993, he scored the winning goal for Arsenal in their FA Cup Final replay against Sheffield Wednesday.

"I've been to Wembley five or six times and been on the losing side only once," Linighan, 35, said yesterday. "It's obviously been a lucky

PLAY-OFFS

TODAY: Third division
Northampton Town v Swansea City
TOMORROW: Second division
Brentford v Crewe Alexandra
MONDAY: First division
Crystal Palace v Sheffield United

place and I hope it continues. Scoring the winning goal in a Cup Final is very nice, because it's always going to be in the history books, but this is the present and Monday is the only thing on my mind.

"To get back into the Premiership would be a bonus for me at this stage in my career. I've got two more seasons left on my contract and that would be the ideal way for me to finish."

Palace finished in sixth place at the end of the regular season, two points adrift of Sheffield United, but played impressively in knocking out Wolverhampton Wanderers, who were third, 4-3 on aggregate in the

semi-finals. A repetition of such composure could again give them the edge on Monday.

United's preparations have been hampered by the loss of Chris Short, their defender, who twisted an ankle in a freak fall during training. However, Jan Aage Fjortoft, their Norway striker, remains confident — as long as his team-mates do not become distracted by the occasion.

"To be honest, I don't like all this fuss about playing at Wembley," Fjortoft said. "For this type of game, it doesn't matter where you play. It's secondary to what you want to achieve. We want to get into the Premiership and it doesn't matter where we play, be it the Isle of Man or the north of Scotland. Hopefully, the rest of the players will understand that."

A touch disrespectful, perhaps, and a view unlikely to be shared by Northampton, who will be making their first appearance at Wembley. The club, which is also celebrating its

centenary season, has sold its entire allocation of 35,000 tickets.

"It's surprised me a little bit," Ray Warburton, the Northampton captain, said. "Maybe I shouldn't have been because we've taken 600 fans to places like Carlisle and Hartlepool on a Tuesday night. I hope they all have a good day because they thoroughly deserve it. They've been the best in the division for years."

"I think it will be a fair old game. It will be very tight and maybe just one goal will be enough. Wembley is supposed to be a very tight pitch so it'll be the fitter side that will come out on top in the later stages. Hopefully, that will be us."

Brentford, if successful against Crewe, will consider a flotation on the stock market to help them in the first division. "When the club was promoted the last time, it wasn't geared to cope with it," Dave Webb, the manager, said. "What we're trying to do is organise the club so that if we do go up, it can cope."

MOTOR RACING

Williams go back to their Spanish roots

FROM ANDREW LONGMORE IN BARCELONA

THE name of Patrick Neve will barely raise a footnote in the history of the Williams grand prix team. Neve, a Belgian, looked like Alain Prost, but did not drive like him and disappeared quickly from view, just another Formula One driver whose ambitions outstripped his talent. Yet he should be remembered this weekend in Barcelona.

At the Spanish Grand Prix in May 1977, Neve started a humble 22nd on the grid in a red-and-white March advertising Belle Vue and the No 27. The car was bought second-hand for £14,000 and the tyres were a job lot from motor racing's equivalent of Harlford. Mario Andretti won, Neve nursed his ailing March to twelfth, four laps adrift, and the principles of WGPPE have held good down the past two decades. While a host of teams have come and gone, Williams have risen and prospered.

The number of employees has risen from eight to 250, but the principles of WGPPE have held good down the past two decades. While a host of teams have come and gone, Williams have risen and prospered.

The blip at rain-hit Monaco, fast becoming an unwanted tradition at Williams, gave the rest hope, brought another glimpse of fragility in the team's tactical thinking. In reality, the decision to run both cars on slick tyres just spoke of the need for a new team weather forecaster. There are not many other discernible weaknesses in the Williams armoury. The most pertinent question is which of their two drivers will occupy pole here.

It will not be Damon Hill, the world champion. Hill, who has yet to complete a race this season in the Arrows, completed 31 laps in the untimed session and was docked one of his 12 qualifying laps today as a penalty. The maximum allocation of laps on the opening day is 30. Not that the extra time did him much good. He ended the afternoon session in twentieth place, with only Pedro Diniz, his team-mate, and Jan Trulli, in the Minardi, slower.

It seems a long time since Hill, in his Williams, won the Formula One drivers' title, longer still since those hand-to-mouth early days — not that Williams and Hill will be looking back. "When we're both very old, we might sit back and reminisce a little, but I mean seriously old," Head said. Of Neve, little trace remains. "He was quiet and very difficult to remember," Head said.

Williams have made a rather more lasting impression.

Back in 1977, such dominance was way beyond the thoughts of Frank Williams and his sidekick, Patrick Head. The team had no home, no car and no money. They were not even members of the Formula One Constructors' Association. However, with some help from Neve, who had some sponsorship money behind him, and Saudia Airlines — the sponsors who later transformed the fledgling team into world champions — Williams Grand Prix Engineering (WGPE) began to do business. The budget was £180,000, a figure that would just about cover a day's expenses now. Unit 10, Station Road, Didcot was commandeered as headquarters, though the initial entry was hardly auspicious.

"We didn't have a key for some reason," Head said, "so we broke in. The floor was filthy, there was nothing there."

He seems philosophical, rather than tense, as one who has been through the fire and may now well be fireproof. "We're not thinking we have to win this because," he said. "We just want to win it. I think it was tougher this year than last year. You look at the financial clout of the three teams going down and you think that, next year, it will be hard to surpass them."

He will not be thinking, as he sits on the bench, about the way that his own playing career with England and Manchester United was ended at Wembley when a Hungarian kicked him on the knee. "I'm just glad to get another opportunity to be there," he said.

Meanwhile, "the only thing I dream about is a nice round of golf and a couple of pints of lager afterwards".

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DETAILS FROM BARCELONA

PRACTICE TIMES: 1. J. Alesi (Fr. Benetton) 1:19.55; 2. J. Villeneuve (Can. Williams-Renault) 1:19.76; 3. R. Schumacher (Ger. Jordan-Peugeot) 1:20.18; 4. G. F. F. (It. Jordan-Peugeot) 1:20.57; 5. G. Berger (Austria Benetton-Renault) 1:20.93; 6. D. Coulthard (GB. McLaren-Mercedes) 1:21.31; 7. M. Schumacher (Ger. Ferrari) 1:21.31; 8. J. Herbert (GB. Sauber) 1:21.37; 9. M. Hakkinen (Fin. McLaren-Mercedes) 1:21.42; 10. E. Irvine (GB. Ferrari) 1:21.42; 11. O. Penu (Fr. Prost-Mugen-Honda) 1:21.58; 12. H. H. (Fin. Williams-Renault) 1:21.87; 13. Magnussen (Den. Stewart-Ford) 1:22.89; 14. M. Salo (Fin. Tyrrell-Ford) 1:22.89; 15. U. Katajama (Japan. Minardi-Hart) 1:22.89; 16. S. Nakano (Japan. Prost-Mugen-Honda) 1:22.91; 17. J. Verstappen (Hol. Tyrrell-Ford) 1:23.06; 18. R. Barrichello (Br. Stewart-Ford) 1:23.24; 19. G. Morandini (It. Sauber) 1:23.45; 20. D. Hill (GB. Arrows-Yamaha) 1:25.92; 21. J. Trulli (It. Minardi-Hart) 1:25.94.

CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS (after five races): Drivers: 1. M. Schumacher 34pts, 2. Villeneuve 20, 3. Irvine 14, equal 4. Coulthard, P. Verstappen, Berger and Hakkinen 10, 5. P. F. 9, 6. Barrichello 6, equal 10. R. Schumacher and F. F. 4, equal 12. Herbert and Alesi 3, 14. Salo 2, 15. Lami 1. Constructors: 1. Ferrari 35pts, 2. Williams-Renault 30, 3. McLaren-Mercedes 20, 4. Benetton-Renault 13, 5. Prost-Mugen-Honda 9, 6. Jordan-Peugeot 7, 7. Stewart-Ford 6, 8. Sauber-Personas 4, 9. Tyrrell-Ford 2.

GRANDS PRIX TO COME: Tomorrow: Spanish (Barcelona), June 15; Canadian (Montreal), June 28; French (Magny-Cours), July 13; British (Silverstone), July 27; German (Hockenheim), Aug 10; Hungarian (Hungaroring), Aug 24; Belgian (Spa-Francorchamps), Sept 7; Italian (Monza), Sept 21; Austrian (A1 Ring), Sept 28; Luxembourg (Nürburgring), Oct 12; Japanese (Suzuka), Oct 26; European (Jerez).

Hill ends his reign as Fulham chairman

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

JIMMY HILL, the Fulham chairman, resigned yesterday, only six weeks after the club had clinched promotion into the Nationwide League second division. He wants to spend more time with his family.

Hill, 70, also renowned for his work as a football pundit on BBC television, felt the time was appropriate after the club had finally won its fight to stay at Craven Cottage. It will secure the freehold of the ground at the end of the month.

"It is a new chapter in the story of this unique club, the end of an era," he said. "I need freedom from responsibility, finances, performance and salvation but I have no worries, no responsibilities and no regrets, which is a very nice position to be in."

"I've had ten years and the club has progressed, not so much on the field because we've only just got back to the second division, which is where we started. But we will now own our ground, for the first time in 20 years, and that will give us great stability for future progress."

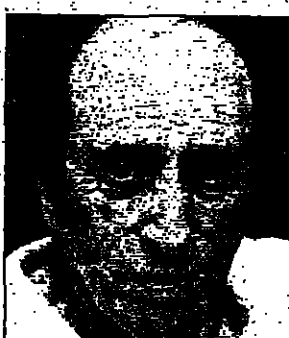
Eric Cantona is to play again, only a week after announcing his retirement. Cantona will turn out tomorrow in a testimonial match in Lille, France, for Stephane and Pascal Planque.

Manchester United have raised no objection. "It is not a problem because it is a testimonial," Ken Ramsden, the United assistant secretary, said yesterday. "We still retain Eric's registration and have the right to refuse permission if we see fit. In this case, though, everything is fine."

Roy Hodgson, the Internazionale manager, has confirmed his decision to resign from the Serie A club earlier than he had originally planned. He was due to leave at the end of the season, to join Blackburn Rovers, but after criticism in the wake of Inter's defeat against Schalke 04 in the UEFA Cup final on Wednesday, he decided to bring forward his departure.

Coppell happy to test survival techniques

BRIAN GLANVILLE



on the manager who came back for more

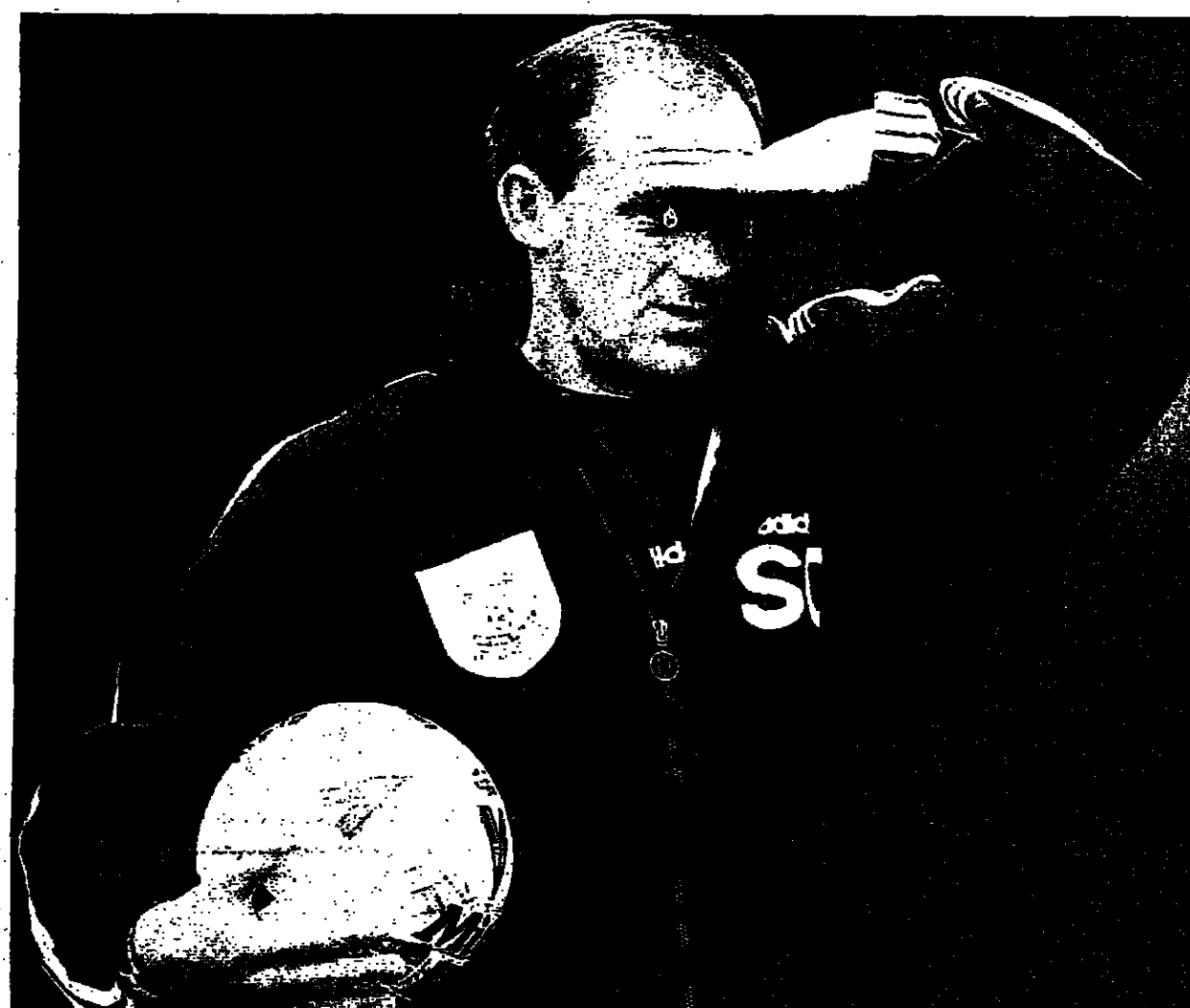
Steve Coppell said Ray Lewington, the Crystal Palace coach, "is a very easy-going man," and watching Coppell, the Palace manager, enjoying himself on the broad, green acres of their Mitcham training ground, it was easy to believe him.

Easy to forget that, only six months ago, a dejected Coppell had quit Manchester City to mid-stream, unable to resist the pressures of the job. Now, back for his second spell as manager of Crystal Palace, he and his team shape up for their Nationwide League first division play-off final against Sheffield United at Wembley on Monday.

Last season, Palace fell at this final hurdle. Now, they face a Sheffield United team that has beaten them twice in the league, the second time, at Bramall Lane, by a resounding 3-0.

"Ten months of misery," Coppell has said it would be, were Palace to climb back into the FA Carling Premiership. Smiling now, he said: "It was a flippant remark," but it reflected "my last season in charge, when we were relegated. That was the hardest 12 months I've spent. Looking at the opposition. Thinking, we're in with a one in eight, one in ten chance."

Though he described himself, cheerfully, as "caretaker manager, question mark," it is clear that he means to carry on and, win or lose on Monday, he is likely to be



Coppell is looking ahead to the chance of a return to the Premiership with Palace. Photograph: Julian Herbert

offered the job. "It's on my passport," he said. "I am a manager, and that's what I consider my profession to be."

The grim weeks at Manchester City have clearly been consigned to memory. "I've said all I want to say on that subject," he said. "Everything worked out for the best for Manchester City. It's worked out best for me. Everybody's happy. To drag up the past is no benefit to anybody."

Palace, at least, is familiar ground, whatever the recurrent pressures. There were no problems, says Lewington, when Coppell returned to Selhurst Park. "I think the fact that Steve was there anyway [in an administrative role] made the transition fairly easy," he said. "The players knew Steve from a year back, and he had been going into

the training ground. They all knew him, and he didn't have the problems of a new manager, coming in to stamp his authority. Steve's a very easy-going man, and I think the lads have taken to him, because he came in at a very difficult time."

He would say, as he's modest, there were only 14 or 15 games to go. In fact, we've been going through a bit of a wobble. I think he's done very well in what could have been a difficult situation."

So what of Coppell's "flippant" remark about those ten months? "I think," Lewington said, "he's probably referring to the fact that those teams go up to survive, and nothing else; and quite a fair few have come down, including us, of course. He knows when we go

up, and if we go up, then we'll need strengthening; no doubt."

Coppell, indeed, is well aware of what awaits should Palace prevail. He is a supporter of the play-offs. "Half the table have a prospect of being in the play-offs," he said. "I'm all for them."

"At the end of ten or 11 months, we now find ourselves with 90 minutes to decide our future — whether we have to cut our coat according to our cloth and spend another long and arduous year in the first division."

"Whoever wins on Monday will be guaranteed favourites to come straight down. I always think it's better to be there, in the Premiership, even for one year. You gain financially, your players become better players, even for being in it for one season."

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BRIDGESTONE

CRICKET: PLACE ON TOUR TO WEST INDIES REMAINS OBJECTIVE FOR BATSMAN WHOSE CAREER WAS SENT SPINNING BY WARNE

Smith seeks chance to rescue battered reputation



Smith: determined

Robin Smith sat in a quiet corner of the players' dining area at Cardiff yesterday and presented the case for his own defence. On the other side of the misty windows, steady rain was depriving him of the opportunity to convert his unbeaten 81 into the 52nd hundred of his career.

The conditions allowed him time to think, reflect, and plan for the summer ahead. The day before, Smith was transfixed by the television as England completed their emphatic win over Australia at Headingley. This might have filled him with anger, jealousy even, a year ago. Now, the prevailing emotion is pride.

At 33, he insists that his own

career is not confined to the county treadmill, and if the call from the selectors is not made in the present series, then he believes that he would be a good "pick" for the winter tour of the West Indies.

Smith made the last of his 62 Test appearances against South Africa 16 months ago. He was the top-scorer in the first innings, and followed that by making 75 and 25 in his two appearances in the World Cup, after recovering from injury. At no time has he received an official explanation for his omission since.

"I have never been one who is deliberately controversial, but now I can say that I was amazed at my exclusion last year," Smith said. "I am not unhappy in any way now,

Richard Hobson meets a discarded England player who is fighting for a future at Test level

and I must stress that, although I might be shooting myself in the foot by saying this, I think the selectors are right to stick with a settled side, even if I am not in it.

"The batsmen all did well over the winter and deserve a chance. In the past, the selectors have chopped and changed so much there has been no team spirit or confidence."

It does not take much for Smith to lose his own self-belief. His defence generally surprises those who meet him for the first time and expect his character to be an

extension of his ebullient batting. His unease leaps to the fore even after presenting statistical evidence to repel the notion that he is vulnerable against spin bowling.

He said: "Every time a spinner comes on, I feel a little nervous. I am so worried that he will get me out because I know what will be said and written, even though I know I am capable of dealing with him."

"Shane Warne got me out three times in the 1993 series, but he is the best bowler I have ever faced, and practically every other batsman in

the world has struggled against him. A middle order batsman will not have my average in Test cricket [more than 43] if he could not play spin. My figures against India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are better than those against the West Indies, who have a pace-orientated attack. Unfortunately, there is a stigma about me and spin bowlers which has caused lots of worry and heartache."

Clearly, he would relish the opportunity to take on Warne again, but appreciates that the situation will arise only if he scores enough runs for Hampshire. Though admitting that he misses the big crowds, he says that he has never found motivation a problem.

Last season, he scored more than 1,300 runs at an average approaching 50, and, after his first winter away from the game for 16 years, feels empowered to do better still. "I still have that big desire to play for England; I just hope that I am given the chance," he said.

While his reputation, unjust or not, may restrain the selectors from recalling him against Australia it could tempt them to choose him in the Caribbean. Peter Willey and Wayne Larkins were recalled for series in the West Indies because of their ability to cope with fast bowlers. Here, Smith's ability goes unquestioned whatever the statistics suggest. Appearances, after all, can be deceptive.

Kent's last-wicket pair leave Sussex in state of shock

By Jack Bailey

HORSHAM (third day of four): Sussex, with nine second-innings wickets in hand, are 391 runs behind Kent

THIS was emphatically not a day that Sussex will wish to remember. It began happily enough for them with a steady erosion of Kent's second innings, so that Kent were limited to a lead of 178 with only two wickets remaining and the clock standing at 11.40am when the eighth wicket fell. Then came Strang to join Marsh and these two added 60. Then came Phillips, and it was 5.22pm before the final wicket was taken.

In adding 183 for the last wicket, Marsh and Phillips beat the previous highest last-wicket stand for Kent against Sussex by 94 runs. This had been set by R. T. Thornton and A. Hearne in 1886, when Gloucestershire was Prime Minister. By the time Marsh left the field, with 142 against his name, he had batted for little short of five hours, his partnership with Phillips had lasted for nearly 3½ hours and Sussex could be forgiven if, by then, they thought that Prince

Charles had succeeded to the throne.

This was Marsh's ninth century and his highest score for Kent. It is doubtful if he will make a more useful one. As for Phillips, well, he has had a bumper match: a career-best haul in the first Sussex innings with five wickets and now the first half-century of what promises to be a worthy few years in Kent's cause.

Thanks to these two, Sussex were set the monumental task of scoring 422 to win; or, put another way, a day and 16



Marsh: ninth century

overs to endure for a draw. They lost Radford to a fine, diving catch by that man Marsh, but survived the rest of the day. It is some consolation that, in 1991, Sussex made 436 in the last innings to tie with Kent, but not much.

Although the pitch had clearly lost some of its pace, there was no early hint of the extraordinary events to follow. Fleming hit Robinson for three fours in an over before holding out at long leg; Cowdrey was caught off bat and pad at short leg, after playing pretty well in an innings that had altogether spanned 93 balls.

Then McCague was caught at slip by Greenfield, after second slip had knocked off the ball. This gave Drakes his second wicket of the morning and, in all, three Kent wickets had fallen in 11 balls. Enter Strang to join Marsh in a stubborn defensively-minded stand that gradually caused a shifting of the balance between bat and ball. Strang played straight and Marsh did most of the scoring, but it was a long time before Sussex cottoned on to the fact that this was more than a little local difficulty.

Marsh and Strang added 60 for the ninth wicket before Strang was well taken, low down at first slip. Still Sussex must have thought they had matters reasonably in hand, even though Phillips looked ominously comfortable, but, after he had batted through 20 overs, Phillips was split at short square leg, soon after the second new ball had been taken and with the score on 290 for nine.

Five overs later, Marsh was missed at long leg. A six resulted and the record books were out, just in case. By now, Sussex had, as they say, lost it. Phillips's 50 and Marsh's century, followed hard on the heels of each other. Ten was delayed by half an hour and when, shortly after the interval, Marsh skied to mid-wicket, Sussex were reeling in the face of the highest last-wicket stand ever recorded against them.

Marsh, who had reached his century with his ninth four, besides hitting two vast sixes, had a truly marvellous day, both as captain courageous and as a batsman who mixed stout defence with well-timed aggression.

Phillips, his last-wicket partner, used his reach to great effect, displaying an immensely wide, straight bat, and, in the later stages of his innings, showed a considerable penchant for the extra cover drive.

Altogether, thanks to these two, it was a remarkable day's cricket.

It was said by one observer that the pitch died at noon and there is something in that. Certainly, the pitch has grown blander as the game has progressed; but, in a game of many twists and turns, it would be a brave man who now set Sussex's chances at better than a draw.



Moffat, of Middlesex, steps forward to block the bowling of Brown at Edgbaston yesterday. Photograph: Barry Greenwood

Middlesex youngsters assume control

By Derek Hodgson

EDGBASTON (third day of four): Middlesex, with nine second-innings wickets in hand, lead Warwickshire by 84 runs

ALLAN DONALD, South Africa's senior bowler, and Jacques Kallis, that country's rising star, dined out on Thursday evening. Kallis did not appear yesterday, while Donald bowled six overs in the morning, looking out of sorts, and then retired. Both have stomach upsets, but Donald was able to bowl again last evening with his usual fire as Middlesex fought to retain control.

With 150 overs lost on the first two days, something dramatic was required to set this match alight. Warwickshire

needed Donald to effect a quick dismissal of the Middlesex tail and Mike Gatting would have liked Kallis's bowling as an extra option. In the event, the day belonged to the young men of Middlesex, who, from an unlikely position of 97 for five on Thursday, carried their county into command.

Scott Moffat and James Hewitt, the overnight eighth-wicket pair, resumed in unfamiliar hazy sunshine and before a crowd that included one man who had travelled from Northumberland to see this fixture. By mid-afternoon, the sun had broken through and the cricket, after two moribund days, came to life. People even stopped talking about England's win at Headingley.

Hewitt was content to play

the supporting role as Moffat, 24, a South African-born all-rounder, who went to school in Elstree and reached Lord's via Hertfordshire, boldly took boundaries off Warwickshire's seam bowlers. He is a compact player and if he can bowl off-breaks as well as he can bat, he will be a very useful recruit. The pair had added 53 in 24 frustrating overs for Warwickshire when Moffat waved ambitiously and was caught behind. He struck seven fours off the 153 balls that he faced in his career-best innings of 47.

Hewitt, left with Fraser and Tufnell for partners, must have known his days were numbered even before he was run out by Hemp's last, accurate throw from cover and the innings closed shortly before lunch with extras — all 51 of

them — a vital contributor to the Middlesex score.

Warwickshire's first shock came four overs after lunch, when Moles, the captain, lost his middle stump to the long-striding Johnson, the first indication that a drying surface had not lost all its mischief.

Gatting, intrigued, rang the changes with his bowling, but was denied a further breach by Hemp. The former Glamorgan left-hander makes an unusual four: overs after, lunch when Moles, the captain, lost his middle stump to the long-striding Johnson, the first indication that a drying surface had not lost all its mischief.

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ed a silly mid-on and a short leg for Tufnell and was rewarded with Wasim's wicket as the opener went back and was caught behind. Warwickshire then went from a wobble into a dive as Hewitt, from the Pavilion End, where Brown had been so effective, broke up the middle.

Two fine, low catches at second-slip accounted for Ferny and Brown, while Ostler's hopes of a leading a rally were ended when he went to pull Hewitt and played on. Neil Smith, a capable last-ditcher, lasted until just after tea before playing tamely to cover and it was the unlikely pair of Mo Sheik and Tony Frost, to cheers that turned from the ironic to the congratulatory, who added a brave 35 before Donald ran out Sheikh.

Russell's defiance inspires recovery

By Rupert Cox

GLOUCESTER (third day of four): Essex, with six first-innings wickets in hand, are 154 runs behind Gloucestershire

IT IS, no doubt, a surprise to all but their most ardent followers that Gloucestershire head the championship table, even at this early stage. Having been plunged into disarray by a rampant Essex seam attack on Thursday evening in hospitable bowling conditions, they exhibited the sort of resilience more associated with leaders than also-rans yesterday.

Gloucestershire recovered from 84 for seven to 290 with a typically obstinate 91 not out, in 185 balls. From Jack Russell. This is the continuation of an extraordinary run of batting form for Russell in which he has scored 50-plus in nine of his past 11 championship innings.

Russell's first-class scores this season make impressive reading: 57, 66, 59 and now 91 not out, testament not only to his consistency but also to his desire to recapture his Test place, and with it a fifteenth cap. It would come at a cost, though, as his beloved sunbat would presumably contravene directives from the England and Wales Cricket Board.

Resuming in yet more overcast and chilly environs, a score of 130 on what had proved to be a capricious pitch looked beyond Gloucestershire, but with the surface pacified by a dry night and an

older ball, they were galvanised by Russell's inherent stickability, while Essex struggled to recapture the control and verve so apparent the previous evening.

In Tim Hancock, Russell found a worthy ally. Initially, runs had to be pried out, but gradually, as the pitch eased, batting became more fluent. Hancock, demoted this season to bolster the batting after the all-rounders, mixed spells of playing and missing with some handsome off-side strokeplay, allowing Gloucestershire to reach lunch unscathed at 173 for seven.

Having survived a straight-forward chance to Prichard in the gully, Hancock soon clipped Cusack in square leg for a stand of 108 in 45 overs, but in Ball and Russell the home team maintained their recovery with a ninth-wicket stand of 98. Danny Law polished off the innings, in successive balls, to leave Russell nine short of a seventh first-class century, and Gloucestershire with two unlikely batting partners.

Essex also laboured against the new-ball bowling of the Tasmanian, Shaun Young, and Mike Smith, who swung the ball viciously. Prichard, caught in the crease, was palpably leg-before. Hussain waited meekly and Gooch left disconsolately when adjudged in front. It gave Stuart Law the chance to emphasise his quality with a fine 77-ball half-century, consigning the match, in all probability, to a draw.

Injuries leave Nottinghamshire uphill task

By Ivo Tennant

TRENT BRIDGE (third day of four): Nottinghamshire, with five second-innings wickets in hand, need 123 runs to beat Derbyshire

IN SPITE of bowling out Derbyshire for only 117 yesterday, Nottinghamshire were left with too much to do. A total of 245 to win might just have been feasible, even on this pitch, had not both their openers been injured and a further specialist batsman gone to hospital for an X-ray. Only Kevin Evans, who made 47, batted with any authority, and he was out shortly before the close.

Poor Nottinghamshire. In addition to being without Robinson and Pollard, who have a fractured hand and

cracked finger respectively, they had to contend with Downman retiring after he was hit on his right elbow by Harris. He intended returning if required to bat — and, for that matter, either of the two openers could occupy an end one-handed. Theirs was seemingly a notional chance of victory.

Although Robinson suffered his injury when fielding, the state of the pitch was such that every batsman could have done with some headline to pad their gloves. In addition, Nottinghamshire did not bat well. The captain was run out and others played erroneous shots outside off stump.

It did not take Malcolm Long to have Metcalfe, who opened with Downman, caught at second slip. After Downman had gone off, having tried to

avoid one that did not lift as much as he anticipated, Johnson was run out seeking a single that was never apparent. Looking to take a run from a shot steered to cover point's left, he set off tentatively, awaiting his partner's call.



Bowen: 11 wickets

By the time he was into his stride, Harris had thrown down the stumps at the umpire's end.

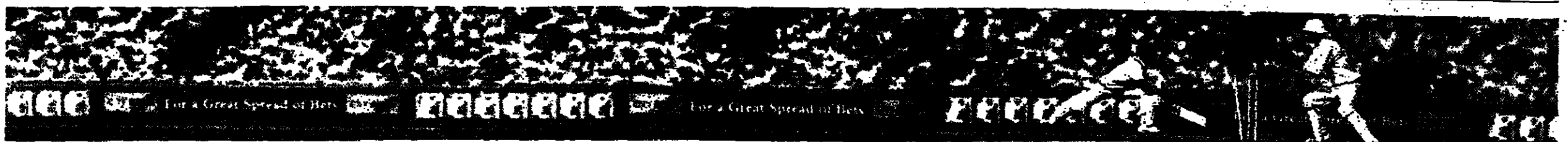
Usman Afzal was taken at the wicket off Dean and when Archer went the same way off Malcolm directly after tea, Nottinghamshire were effectively 43 for six. Evans, however, proved to be in cussed mood, as if intent that the four wickets he took earlier in the day should not be squandered. He put on 60 to 22 overs with Noon, looking, if nothing else, to take the match into a fourth day.

If Nottinghamshire had not conceded quite so many extras on the first two days, they might just have had a chance of victory. Bowen took a further three wickets yesterday, giving him match figures of 11 for 109. He and Evans

accounted for eight Derbyshire batsmen between them. Of these, Alford, the night-watchman, was well taken low down at third slip. Jones topped a drive and any number of batsmen were leg-before.

Only Adams, who was well forward to Bowen, could count himself unfortunate. Not many sides, though will bowl out Derbyshire for as little as 117 this season, even if that did not greatly enhance their chances of winning.

Soon, Dominic Cork should be back to bolster the middle order, to say nothing of England's cricket this summer. His groin injury is responding to treatment and he expects to be running within the next fortnight and playing at some stage in the next three weeks.



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RACING 46, 47

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SPORT

GOLF 48

Slow play mars opening round of flagship event

SATURDAY MAY 24 1997

Clubs to cash in on new world order

THERE is to be no rest for the overplayed, some say the overpaid, footballers, and no protection for national associations losing out in the club versus country argument.

Next Saturday, as England play their vital World Cup qualifying match against Poland in Katowice without Robbie Fowler and Steve McManaman, the committee men of Fifa sit in Zurich to approve another tournament, a proposed world club championship, to fill the idle months of July in years between World Cup and European championship summers.

So, instead of the Football Association being able to look towards higher authority to exert its rights to the precious time of players, the governors of Fifa, the world governing body, are looking to milk the profits at an even greater rate. These gentlemen, so

handy with their health warnings that too much, too often is demanded of too few leading international players, are adding to the burden.

The Fifa executive last December asked Sepp Blatter, the general secretary, to come up with a format for the world club championship. He will propose a 12-day tournament involving eight teams: the champions from each of Fifa's six confederations, plus the champions of the host country and the winner of the annual meeting of the champions of Europe and South America. The eight will cross their time zones and the oceans to compete in two mini-leagues, rather like the Champions' League, followed by a semi-final, final and third-place play-off — 10 matches in all.

One of the sore points, of course, is that Uefa, now grossing more than £125 million per season

Rob Hughes reveals how Fifa's plans for another money-spinning global tournament would exacerbate football's club versus country dispute

through the Champions' League, has simultaneously increased that tournament to 24 teams, increased the number of matches from 61 to 85... and increased the opportunities for countries such as England to enter not one but two clubs.

It would lead to the day when the only respite for an ailing player is the operating theatre, and even then, given the difference of opinion between Liverpool and England, the administrators will haggle over the timing of the operation, irrespective of the individual's welfare — and to think that Juninho came to England for a more sensible league programme than the 100 games that he played with São Paulo in 11 months.

If approved, Fifa's new championship would fill out the existing calendar thus: 1998, the World Cup in France, 1999, the world club championship in, at a guess, Japan, whose Sony company is about to replace Philips as one of the Champions' League sponsors. 2000, the European championship in Holland and Belgium. 2001, the world club championship, venue to be decided. 2002, the World Cup in Japan and South Korea.

This comes just as Fifa itself published statistics showing that there were 311 full international matches in 198 countries during 1996. It comes before Fifa has achieved the insoluble — trying to co-ordinate the calendars of Europe, South America, Africa and Asia. Their medical warnings are as profuse as drops of sweat, yet there is no formula that prevents a goalkeeper such as Kasey Keller from being flown across the Atlantic at the peak of the season to represent Leicester City and the United States within a matter of days.

We cannot blame the individual player who, after all, must reap while he may. He will, in any case, be mindful of the shattering, premature end to a career that came in a single tackle at Old Trafford last year for David Buss, the Coventry City defender.

These players need protection. It is surely the duty of administrators to offer it. Similarly, football addicts around the world need to fit in a summer holiday. Friction between national associations and clubs can only increase, and the ending of the off-season will leave players no option but to make choices of whether to miss club or country matches while they have essential running-repair surgery. As one of Fifa's leading commercial backers observed yesterday, it is the clubs that are becoming smarter and better-run than the associations, the clubs that will carry the financial clout in future disputes.

"You are going to get it more and more," Terry Venables, the former England coach, said of the England-Liverpool dispute. "International football will become invisible apart from World Cups. It is a very dangerous situation." Dangerous, too, to keep on throwing interna-

tional fixture lists at the television moneypot. The rapacious appetite of football for television exposure, despite warnings from Blatter and others against it, increases, but will the guarantees necessarily deliver?

At the same Zurich meeting of Fifa's executive next Saturday, João Havelange, the president, is expected to address members on a matter of growing concern. Last July, Fifa handed the television rights for the World Cups of 2002 and 2006 to the German media company, the Kirch Group. Now, according to at least one of the companies that bid unsuccessfully for those rights, Fifa is asking Kirch to give proof that it has the finances to guarantee the US\$2.24 billion agreed for those rights. A television deal signed in haste a year ago, and repeated not exactly at leisure — but what is leisure, on or off the field, in the football industry?

Hoddle treats Gascoigne to quiet night in

BY OLIVER HOLT, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

GLENN HODDLE said it was Monday, the dissenters insisted it was Tuesday. In the end, they reached an accommodation and agreed that perhaps Paul Gascoigne's birthday would last for 48 hours. "He is so special, he has got two," Hoddle, the England coach, said.

Gascoigne and his birthdays, of course, have a habit of colliding like dynamite and a lit fuse. Last year, he celebrated number 29 in the Jump Club's dentist's chair in Hong Kong, helped along by some concoctions called Flaming Lamborghinis.

The fact that he will kiss his 20s goodbye two days before England fly out to Katowice next week for the vital World Cup qualifier with Poland is not, perhaps, the most auspicious of omens.

So, yesterday, Hoddle decided to keep Gascoigne, the unpredictable and lavishly gifted Rangers and England midfielder, out of the public glare. He is dreading any twists in the sobriety of a player everyone knows is about to push open the doors to the Last Chance Saloon.

The media had been led to understand that Gascoigne would give a press conference at the England hotel in Cheshire yesterday, where he is preparing for his international comeback, against South Africa at Old Trafford this evening. That duty was entrusted instead to Phil Neville, who will make his first appearance for England on home soil today, and Hoddle was left to explain his reasons for shielding Gascoigne from the limelight.

Pay rise ends boycott threat

FEARS that the South Africa team would boycott the match, after a dispute about appearance-money, were allayed yesterday when the South African Football Association (Safa) reluctantly agreed to give each of the players an increased fee. However, Safa was unhappy at having to concede to the last-minute demands and described the players as "greedy" and "mercenary".

"The day before the game," Hoddle said, "he needs to get his mind well and truly switched on to focusing on the game and playing well. In a way, it keeps the pressure off him. It is the professional thing to do to let him have this time to himself."

"He can just get himself nice and steady today. We were going to do something with him today, but on reflection the only way that Paul can possibly turn this thing around is to be guided and I felt that him coming here today would not have been the right thing for him."

"He is going to be wanting to play well. The thing with Paul is that you do not want to quell his spirit, but he has to realise that he is 30 on Monday, that in many ways he is at his peak and, if he can get himself physically and mentally right and keep himself fit for the next three years, the game becomes easier."

Hoddle's hope must be that Gascoigne, who has lost 17lb in a crash diet and looks leaner and fitter than ever before, can at least last 90 minutes against the team that won the African Nations Cup last year.

The real importance of the game, against a side likely to be captained by Lucas Radebe, the Leeds United defender, and featuring players such as Mark Fish, another defender on the fringes of the Lazio team, is as a warm-up for the match against Poland.

Hoddle may choose not to risk Alan Shearer or David Seaman and could give a chance in attack to Paul Scholes, although Ian Wright is probably the favourite if Shearer is absent. Gascoigne, though, will definitely play and, if he performs anywhere near his best, Hoddle will turn to him again in Katowice.

It will be in the Slaski Stadium, where Italy coasted to a goalless draw last month, that Gascoigne will be asked to try to rectify the lack of invention that stymied England in their victory over Georgia. First, though, they have to get past that birthday.



Tongue-twister: Hoddle explains his decision to keep Gascoigne away from a news conference yesterday. Photograph: Malcolm Croft

"If he is going to go and have a drink," Hoddle said, "I will go and have a drink with him and keep an eye on him. We will be meeting back up on Monday so we will have a

cake made for him and have a drink with him in the hotel. "If we were playing an international on Saturday and he was going home on Sunday and I was not going to see him again for six weeks, he could

end up on the front pages on Tuesday morning after he had done something, whatever. "If that was the case, I would not have any hands on; but he will be within the camp and he has got to be sensible. If he then still goes and does

that, then he will be hammered, but that will not happen. He is looking forward to these matches and I do not think he will jeopardise that. For the record, by the way, Paul Gascoigne will be 30 on Tuesday.

ENGLAND (probable): 3-5-2: T. Flowers (Blackburn Rovers); M. Keown (Aston Villa); S. Campbell (Tottenham Hotspur); R. Pearce (Nottingham Forest); P. Neville (Manchester United); R. Lee (Newcastle United); P. Gascoigne (Glasgow Rangers); D. Batty (Newcastle United); G. Le Tissier (Bournemouth); E. Sheeringham (Tottenham Hotspur); I. Wright (Aston Villa).

Coppell's test, page 49

Star quality bringing new zest to England

BY ALAN LEE, CRICKET CORRESPONDENT

FOLLOWERS of the England cricket team have grown used to a sense of trepidation on big-match mornings. Today, though, those lucky enough to have secured tickets for the second Texaco Trophy game against Australia will have a spring in their steps on the way to the Oval.

One win has not made a summer, but it has made a vast difference to the "feel-good" factor. England's six-wicket success at Headingley on Thursday was achieved by cricket of spirit and by players capable of filling the void left by the characters of a generation ago. Australia will not, after all, have a monopoly on glamour and personalities this season.

The immediate priority, a sixth successive home one-day series, will be secured if England win either of the weekend matches at the Oval and Lord's, which were held on months ago. Spectators are implored to

arrive early in order to comply with essential security checks.

Should England take the trophy, it will be more of a boost to them than a blow to the Australians, who continue to broadcast the phlegmatic view that they are acclimatising steadily with a view to peaking when the Tests begin. However, it would not be without long-term implications. On one hand, the scrutiny of Mark Taylor's position as captain of Australia would intensify; on the other, England would generate greater belief, both among the public and in their own dressing-room.

Such a mood ought to be attainable with certain of the match-winners on Thursday around. Although the most influential contribution, calming and convincing, was made by Graham Thorpe, it was the input of the Welshman, the Yorkshireman and the retrieved Australian that illuminated the image of new England.

Robert Croft, who bowled his ten overs for 16 runs — only 12 balls were scored from — has become the

consummate slow bowler in one-day cricket and he is a boisterous, energetic and popular team man. In Wales, he is already a celebrity, the subject of a series of TV documentaries. The rest of the country will take him to their hearts this summer.

Hearts have already been opened to Darren Gough, his good friend; it

has just been a question of waiting for him to produce. He is doing so now, bowling with a skill and verve that has already impressed the Australians. Much more, and it may

unravel them, almost as much as the thought of being upstaged by a man whom they probably still claim as one of their own.

Adam Hoggie considers himself English, and no Australian in opposition on Thursday would now dare

deny it, yet he possesses a nature that accurately traces his origins. He is confident to the brink of being brash and so obsessively competitive that he admits that he has sometimes begun verbally abusing opponents almost unconsciously. Oddly, though, he is a very nervous starter with the bat and Australia, having witnessed his susceptibility, will play upon it. On Thursday, he was fortunate to get to double-figures, once there, he was a different, highly assertive player.

He must conquer any such failing if, as the nation now fervently hopes, he is to become the batting all-rounder of power and personality that everyone wishes to see. Hoggie will be the centre of attention on his home ground today, but he must heed the wise words of Michael Atherton, his captain. "It is not heroes that we are looking for," he said recently, "but heroic cricket."

Equally, while the England team will look for some partisan support this weekend, nobody will be pleased

by a repeat of the gracelessness of Thursday, when Shane Warne and Taylor were booed by a dimwitted section of the Headingley crowd. The notorious Western Terrace generally behaved well, but these incidents let them down.

Of greater concern to the Australians today is identifying a fifth bowler for conditions likelier to support "higher" scores than at Headingley. Greg Blewett is still feeling his knee injury and England would welcome some more of Mark Waugh's off spin, so Australia must either employ Michael Bevan's wrist-spin or draft in Ricky Ponting.

England, meanwhile, will feel mightily satisfied if they start the summer with a trophy. "I sensed there were very few who gave us a chance," Atherton said. "In a restaurant on Wednesday evening, a group of people told us as much." Already, the doubters know different; but the job is very far from complete. Whatever happens this weekend, it will only just have begun.

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SATURDAY MAY 24 1997

As British summers become warmer our open-air pools are too precious to lose, reports John Goodbody



Why are we closing our lidos?

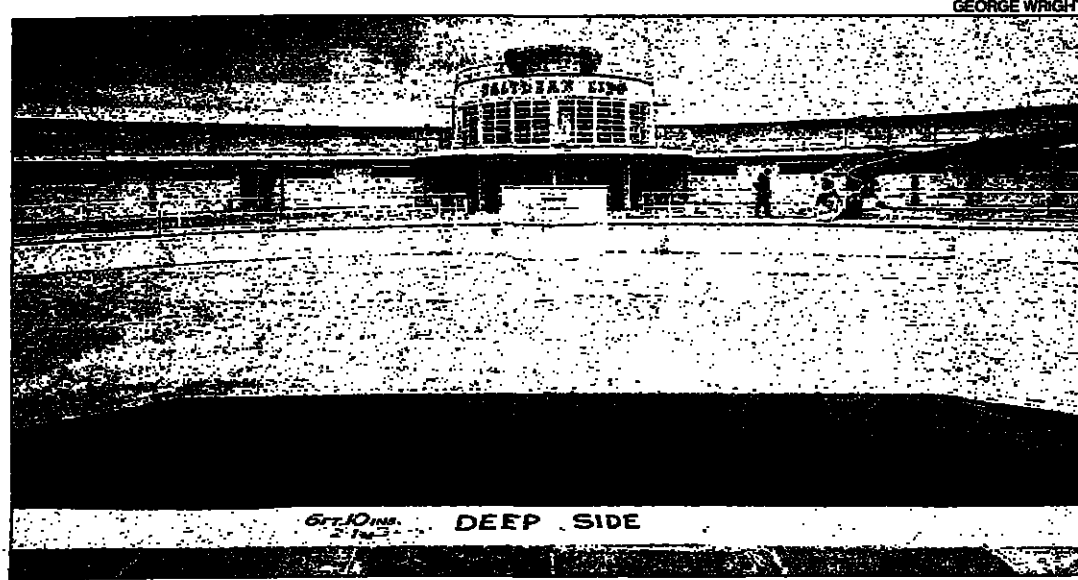
The lido, whether it is an oasis of calm in the city or a glamorous seaside pleasure palace, has a special place in the nation's heart. For many lidos, this holiday weekend marks the start of the swimming season — the ones that are still open, that is. In 1950, there were 150 of these magnificent outdoor water complexes spanning Britain. Tragically, over the last couple of decades, countless lidos have been demolished, or simply closed and left to rot. This year, fewer than 65 will be in business. And this is in a country where summer temperatures are soaring and fresh air and outdoor space becoming rarer.

So, why aren't our lidos flourishing? Blame a combination of local council cutbacks, some caused by central government restraints, and changes in British social habits. Compared to centrally heated leisure centres and indoor water parks, the surviving lidos are often con-

sidered anachronistic. Yet not only do many pools contribute to the architectural legacy of the country, they still provide swimming and sunbathing for millions of people. Indoor facilities are booming, but I am sure that if they had the chance, few of their customers would choose to swim inside instead of outdoors when the sun is beating down and the water is more than 60F.

Swimming is just not the same in the clammy atmosphere of a heavily chlorinated indoor pool. Between 1986 and 1995, I swam four miles every morning at the Parliament Hill lido in Hampstead, north London. Only a house move to Hertfordshire curtailed my visits. The Parliament Hill lido, however, is one of the lucky ones.

Among the lidos which have closed recently are Portobello, described in 1926 as the "fifth wonder of modern Edinburgh"; Finchley in north London, which staged water polo games at the 1948 Olymp-



Open: Parliament Hill lido (top) is as popular as ever, thanks to the Corporation of the City of London. Closed: the Art Deco lido (above) at Saltdean, Sussex — but a £1.5 million rescue package is under way

pics; and Tinside in Plymouth which juts out spectacularly from the cliffs into the sea. At Saltdean, near Brighton in Sussex, the Art Deco building and pool, which is Grade II listed, has been closed for the

past two years. But the good news is that it has been saved. The magnificent site is to be restored and extended with a £1.5 million rescue package put together by businessmen on the South Coast.

The lidos, named after the beach resort in Venice, became popular in Britain between the First and Second World Wars, partly as a reflection of and a response to the German adoration of physical health and

proress, features which were later to become contaminated in Germany through their association with the Nazis. In their untainted form, they were relatively innocent.

As Stephen Spender wrote in his autobiography *World Within World*: "Thousands of people went to the open-air swimming bath... sometimes quite nude and the boys who had turned the deepest mahogany walked among the people with paler skins like kings among the courtiers. The sun healed their bodies of the years of war and made them conscious of the quivering, fluttering life of blood and muscles, covering their exhausted spirits like the pelt of an animal..."

The former London County Council (LCC) opened pools across the capital in the Thirties, including Charlton and Parliament Hill Fields, and Victoria and Brockwell parks. George Lansbury, one-time leader of the Labour Party,

promoted the building of the Serpentine lido in Hyde Park. In the Thirties Society report *Farewell My Lido* (published in 1991), Alicia Pivaro pointed out that the lido movement was not only in favour of providing outdoor facilities for the masses, but was keen to alleviate concern about the nation's health. Swimming was valuable, but so was the sunlight, which provided certain nutrients deficient in the general diet of the time, especially the diet of undernourished, overcrowded city dwellers. Most of the lidos, therefore, were built with sufficient room for sun bathing.

Local councils around Britain, in urban areas and at the seaside, were also active. At Barry in South Wales, the Knap was built in the 1920s by registered unemployed workmen who received ten shillings a week. The pool was 120 yards long — more than twice the length of an Olympic pool — and originally filled with sea

Continued on page 2

SHOPPING 23 GARDENING 46 PROPERTY 7-10 COUNTRY LIFE 11 CROSSWORD 13 FEATURES 14 HOME LIFE 15 TRAVEL 17-23

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I love maps. I buy maps as other men buy shirts or as most women buy earrings — for the pure pleasure of having lots of them. The first thing I do if I go to a new place is to buy a map of it. If I cannot find one I start to feel uncomfortable, the same sort of feeling you get when you have not had a decent bowel movement in the morning.

I have got five different versions of the London A-Z: Filofax, mini-Filofax-sized, mini-book, standard A5, A5 with ring-binding. And I love them all. I can happily spend an evening reading the A-Z. Well, maybe not an entire evening, but certainly an hour or so. One night I might follow postal districts, another borough boundaries, another night tube London Underground stations. It's good.

I also possess an AA Road Atlas of the British Isles. I may actually have been exaggerating a little about the A-Z, but it is God's honest truth that I can spend a whole evening reading the road atlas. Never mind can, I have done. I may begin by looking up one place, or tracing the journey between two places, and that leads on to others.

As men get older, we become more interested in maps and particularly in the fine detail of transport. Trains used to be our favourite transport subject: men of a certain age, of all political persuasions, can still froth at the mouth about something called the *Beeching Report of 1963*.

Nowadays, men love the road network. At social functions, while the women tend to talk about their

children, the older men talk about the details of their journey to the function. "So, Geoff, you took the A451 and then the B7498, eh? And how was that? How was the traffic? Roadworks?"

I am becoming like that. Perhaps my atlas reading is a form of training for an initiation into middle age. I am 32 years old. You had better memorise the picture of me to the right, imagine how I will look — say, 15 years from now — and then remember to avoid me. It gives me no pleasure to write that if you get stuck with me at somebody's wedding in 2012, you are going to get very seriously bored.



ROBERT CRAMPTON

I have got a *National Geographic Atlas of the World*. I have got a *Bartholomew Mini Atlas of the World*. I have got a *Michelin Road Atlas of France*. I have got

MAPS

street guides to all the big cities I have ever been to. I know the geography of New York City intimately, although I have spent no more than a few days there. I have got a Tube map of Moscow. I know where the arrondissements are in Paris. I have got large-scale Ordnance Survey maps of many parts of the British Isles — anywhere I have spent more than a day or two. If I joined them all up I could wallpaper my room — and a few others, too. I think someone should make and sell OS wallpaper. Maybe they already do.

So I suppose Stanfords in Covent Garden should be my favourite shop. But it isn't. It is a

fine place, but the truth is that I hardly ever go there. I think that the people who patronise specialist shops are those who would like to think they are aficionados of the particular specialism on sale, but actually aren't.

I am like that with many things — I develop an interest in something and then I express the interest by going shopping for it.

The more I shop for such-and-such, the less genuine interest I probably have in it, and then I am left with a load of things that I don't really care about.

Not so with maps. I like to think that my love of maps is creative rather than acquisitive. Throughout my life, as well as buying lots of maps, I have always made my

own. As a child, I used to make plans of the places I stayed in on holiday. I invented places, too — and then drew diagrams of them. I quite like doing bar charts as well. Any imaginative ability that I have has tended to be expressed in diagrams and plans as much as in pictures or words. I would quite like to mount an exhibition of my diagrams and plans and bar charts — they'd be as good as a lot of things you see.

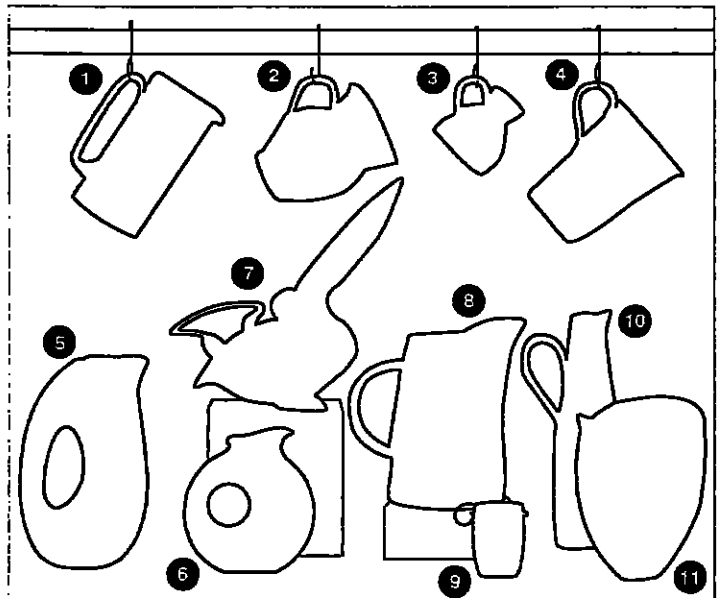
I made a map recently. It wasn't an invention. I got the five A-Z pages for the bit of east London where I live and work and blew them up to A3 on the colour photocopier. Then I Sellotaped them all together. I carry it around with me. Sometimes I get it out and just stare at it. It is so beautiful.

Every pitcher tells a story



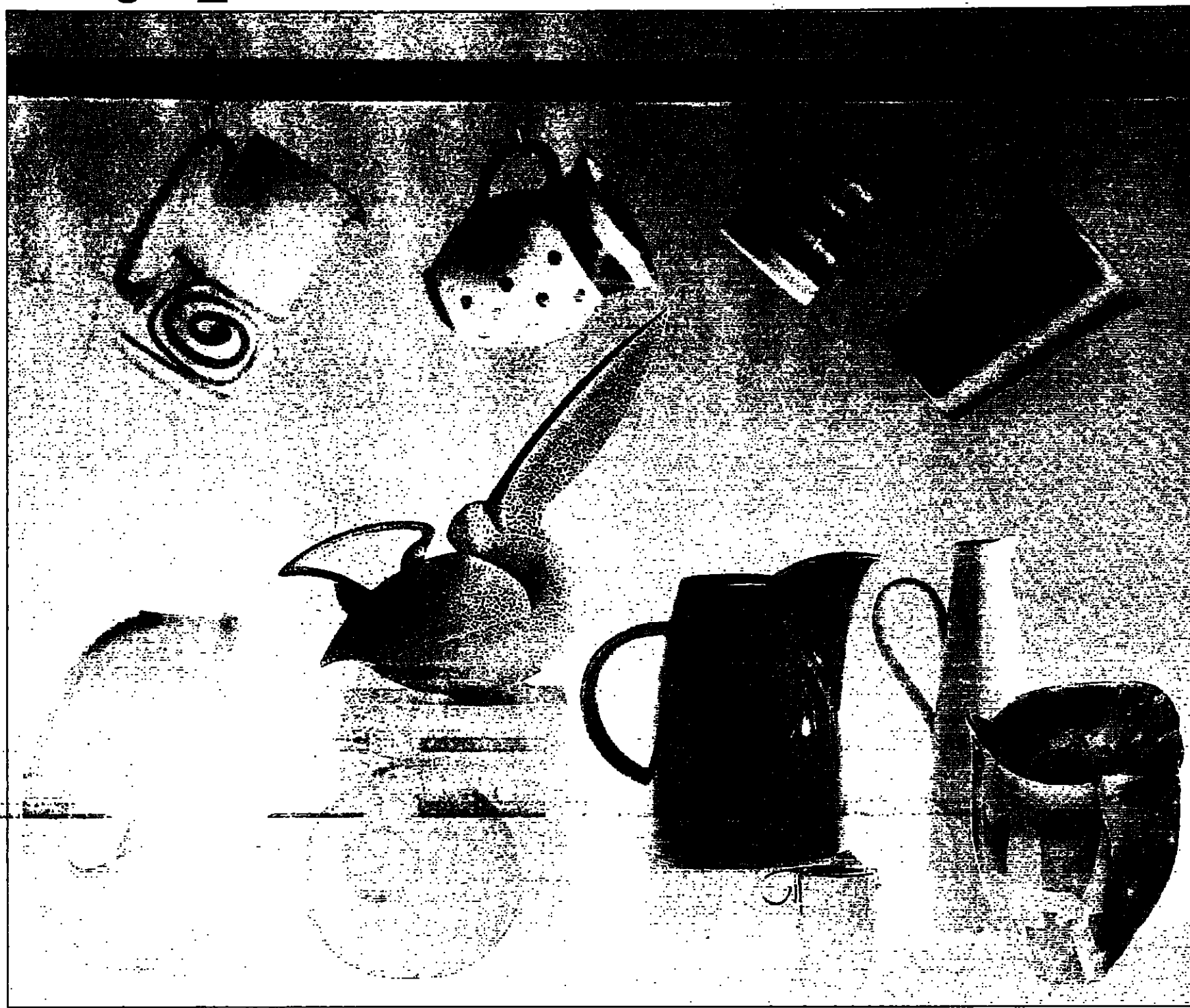
WHETHER your taste is for rustic earthenware, decorative ceramic or svelte glass, a well-proportioned, easy-pouring jug is an essential summer buy. And, says Sudi Pigott, it could also double up as a vase.

LEFT: Visage jug, £61.10, from Blow Zone, mail order or nearest stockists 01384 444654



1 Handmade Spiral jug, £25.30, from Sherakat, nationwide stockists (0181-688 6660). 2 La Limonaia handpainted Italian pitcher decorated with citrus spots and stripes, £23, from Designer's Guild (0171-351 5775). 3 Blue and yellow jug by Andy Lloyd, £19, from Contemporary Ceramics (0171-437 7605). 4 Mexican Bombay Duck aluminium jug available in vibrant gold, pink, turquoise and purple, £24.95, from Liberty (0171-734 1234). 5 Dimple jug by Samantha Sweet, £59, from Newell, Glass, nationwide stockists (0171-272 9341). 6 Sandblasted glass jug with hole, in lime, mauve, white, by David Wall, £52, from Contemporary Applied Arts (0171-436 2344). 7 Pelican bird jug with wings as handles and beak as spout by Anthony Theakson, £115, from Contemporary Applied Arts, as before. 8 Large stoneware toucan jug with ruskin blue glaze by Tavs Jorgensen for Dartington Pottery, £65 plus £8 p&p, from Dartington Pottery (01803 864163). 9 Handmade pewter cream jug, £28 plus £1.50 p&p, from Designs Nic Wood, nearest stockists or mail order on 0114-250 9297. 10 Long, slim jug with white chalky glaze by Hilary Roberts, £69, from the Crafts Council Shop (0171-806 2500). 11 Decorative jug by Adam Aaronson from a variety of colours, £125, from the Handmade Glass Company (0171-610 3344).

Photographs by Des Janson. Styling by Caroline Griffiths



'You swim as the sun comes up and feel good all day'

Continued from page 1
water. Generations of local children learned to swim in the pool, which became known as the "Cold Knap", indicating some very chilly immersions.

The pool's popularity was immense in the 1930s, with bathing beauty and synchronised swimming competitions. On some sunny Bank Holidays, 3,800 people a day might spread out their towels. During the Second World War, it was used as a barrage balloon site, with dummy guns installed to try to fool the German bomber pilots into thinking that the pool was Barry Docks.

Today, The Knap's problems are typical of those which have beset lidos across Britain. This summer its gates will stay locked. Unfortunately, only too often when such pools are closed they fall prey to vandalism. Then, when local opposi-

tion to the closure has subsided, they are demolished, sometimes not even being replaced with other places to have fun.

Surviving lidos are lucky enough to have wealthy or enlightened public authorities prepared to underwrite their deficits. Others have established clubs or self-help groups, which raise money to keep the lidos open. Frequently, and sadly, dedicated protests from supporters just delay the inevitable. Closure of The Knap was first threatened in 1994, but a petition of 14,000 signatures, the largest ever on any issue in the town, kept the pool going. The Vale of Glamorgan Council, which came into existence only last year after local authority reorganisation, found that the quality of the water could not be guaranteed. New machinery and improvements costing about £300,000 were needed. The cash wasn't available. John O'Callaghan, the

director of the council's leisure and cultural services, blames "years and years of neglect. There has been a lack of investment. This council is having to underwrite the net deficit last year of £80,000, when there were 16,000 visits to the pool during the 16-week season. The council might have been prepared to do this if it hadn't been for the further cost of £300,000. We simply can't open the place as it is."

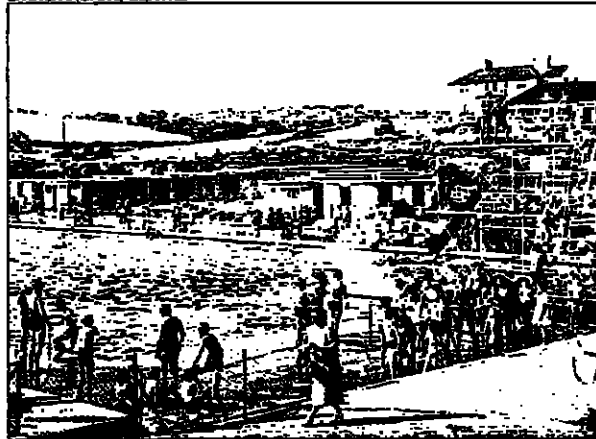
The Knap is significant not only from a social but also an architectural viewpoint. "When I first saw it I thought it was modern seaside architecture at its best," enthuses Victoria Perry, a committee member of the 20th Century Society.

As an architect, she was struck by the pair of crescent-shaped changing rooms which face each other across the lido. She compares some of the design to the penguin pool at London Zoo, appropriately enough, considering the activity.

"The lido is representative of an era," Ms Perry says. "There is the creative use of reinforced concrete that does not have to have strict lines like bricks and mortar. Concrete is such a fluid material; you can make it any shape you want. The building is not listed but I think it should be."

Eunice Tucker, who led the protest against the closure when it was announced in February, and Tom Clements, another Barry resident, are heading the fight to have the pool reopened next year. Mrs Tucker says: "It is very sad, but things have been left to slide." Mr Clements, who has rented a chalet at the pool for 30 years, believes that local authorities have preferred to put money into other recreational ventures rather than the outdoor pool.

LIVING ARCHIVE CENTRE



In its heyday (above) The Knap lido at Barry attracted nearly 4,000 people on summer days, but this year it closed because of lack of funding

Neil Brown, a local councillor at Barry, is holding a "Save the Knap Pool" meeting on June 3. He hopes to secure finance from the National Heritage Lottery board because of the site's rare historical and architectural merit. "I believe we have a good chance," Mr O'Callaghan says. "But when you see it now and remember the pool as it was it is pitiful. We certainly don't want to be known as the people who closed down The Knap."

Parliament Hill Fields, which opened in 1938, flourishes because of the munificence of the Corporation of the City of London, which administers Hampstead Heath, on whose southern edge the pool is situated. As Elaine Harwood, another contributor to *Farwell My Lido*, says: "It stands as the exemplar of the LCC's lido and a monument to the ideals of fresh air and exercise that inspired them."

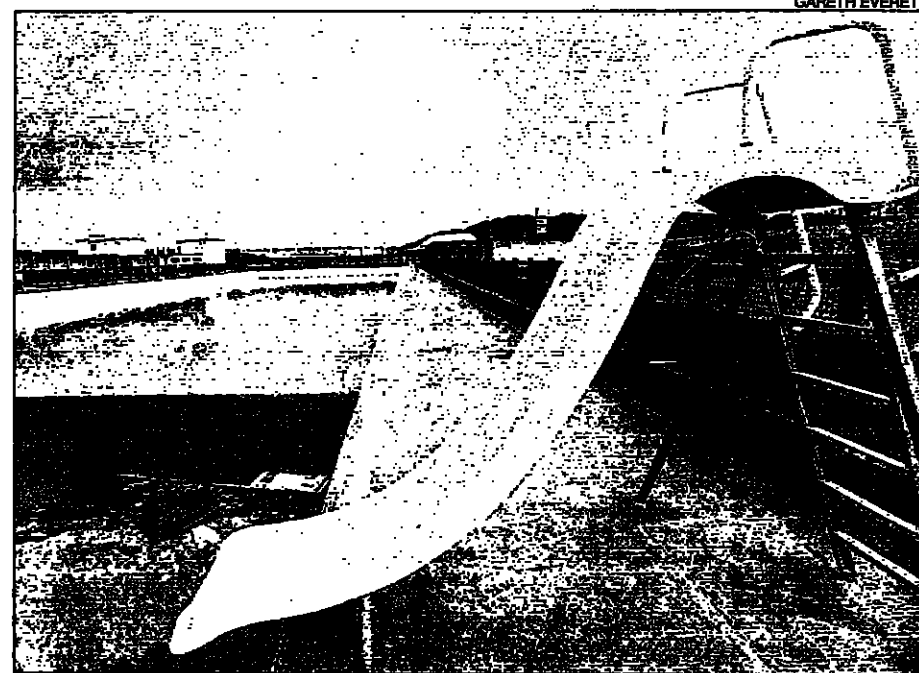
The long-held tradition of allowing free swimming ten months of the year in the early morning (the pool opens at 7am) continues. During heatwaves, up to 400 people a

day have indulged themselves before going off to work or to face the capital's smog. In the scorching summer of 1995, it stayed open into the early evening too, and more than 70,000 people took advantage. Expenses are high for the pool, which is almost 67 yards long. Samples of the 780,000 gallons of water are checked for purification every two hours, lifeguards have to be on duty at all times, and the pool is regularly renovated during the winter.

Paul Canneaux, the corporation's superintendent on the Heath, says that the pool usually has an annual deficit of £150,000, which the corporation is prepared to underwrite.

One regular customer, Jill Sack, the administrator of the 20th Century Society, says that swimming is only part of the experience of going to the pool. "Children can play. People can sunbathe. The lido duplicates many of the conditions of the seaside, but in a city."

The buildings which surround the pool are typical of late 1930s design. There is the



GARETH EVERETT

emphasis on communal areas for sunbathing and lounging, and plenty of space for fresh air and sunshine to ease tired, city-weary limbs, both ideas that Le Corbusier exploited extensively in his architecture.

I didn't always appreciate this aesthetic angle as I ploughed up and down, especially when I was in training for my cross-Channel swim in 1991. Concentration on finishing my session was more immediate than any interest in the architecture or the social significance of the setting. But outdoor swimming has always inspired the senses. As Charles Sprawson explains in his book, *Hunts of the Black Masseur — The Swimmer As Hero*, published in 1992, many 19th-century writers found it fascinating: Byron, Pushkin, Edgar Allan Poe, Flaubert, Swinburne (who wanted to write an ode to Matthew Webb's first successful crossing of the English Channel in 1875), Whitman and Paul Valéry, who described the activity memorably as "fornication avec l'onde".

Even during the winter, some people continue to swim

at Parliament Hill. "It is exhilarating even when the water is really cold," says Harold Schickler, 54, a Parliament Hill regular. "You see the trees change during the season and even the sun coming up. It is one of those things that is easier to do first thing in the morning, and you feel better all day for doing it."

Mr Schickler swims more than 600 yards most days, except in particularly chilly conditions. Like many people who appreciate the pleasures of the lido, he is drawn to water itself, not just the physical idea of swimming.

I also revelled in it. When the weather was poor and the water cold, the swimming was bracing. But I welcomed the sunny days of high summer, too, which brought families who splashed joyously in the shallow end. And it was good to see the keep-fit brigade, who would swim steadily up and down, then sunbathe and eat breakfast afterwards on the terraces.

Sometimes though, on particularly chilly days, when the water stung my face, one of my few companions on my 106

lengths of the lido was a family of mallards, which has lived in the pool for years. When the lido became crowded in mid-season they were moved to Highgate ponds, a mile across the Heath, but missed the lido ambience so much that they waddled back home. For this year's summer season they will be temporarily expelled to a reservoir in Walthamstow, returning to Parliament Hill after September.

Indoor leisure centres have their advantages — not least the warmth — but it is hardly surprising that countless people still prefer enjoying the same activities in the fresh air.

"The more pools that disappear, the more the corporation is likely to keep this place running," says Tony Baker, assistant supervisor of the Parliament Hill lido.

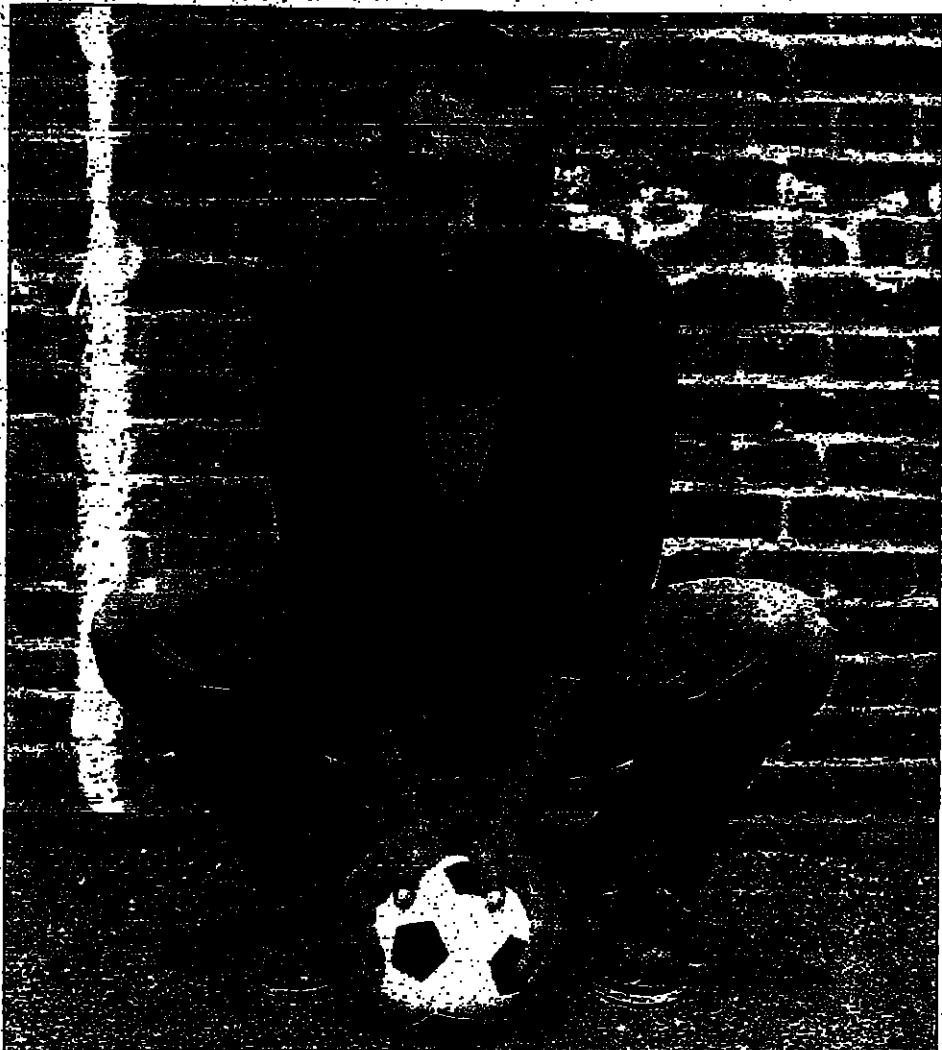
How marvellous it would be if local authorities around the country could adopt this defiant attitude.

John Goodbody (top left) was 48 when he swam the English Channel, the oldest Briton to have completed the crossing in the past 18 years.

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ABOVE: Navy diagonal slinky shirt, £125, Katherine Hamnett (0171-823 1002); Harvey Nichols, SW1. V-neck vest, £49, John Crummy, 43-45 Shorts Gardens, WC2 (0171-240 3534). Grey stripe trousers, £70, French Connection (0171-580 2507). Tan suede sandals, £54.99, Lambretta (01604 847098)

The Seventies come of age

Don't sneer — Jesus sandals (with socks) and tank tops are back with a vengeance, says Heath Brown

Male fashion moves so slowly that a lot of men probably never even noticed that the Seventies had finished. But wouldn't you know it, they're back. You only have to turn your back for a decade or two and suddenly there are tank tops, Jesus sandals and wide-leg trousers everywhere again. It has taken its time, but finally this train-spotter-style is back.

The Seventies influence on menswear today is fresh, new and very Nineties. Skinny-rib jumpers and wide-leg jeans have been salvaged from the archives of *The Double Deckers* and *Maggie*, and brightly patterned tank-tops are teamed with fitted tailoring to create contemporary looks with a Seventies edge.

Shirts are tight and slimline in soft jerseys or fluid synthetics. They should be worn open-necked with tight, tubular short-sleeves. Bri-Nylon polo shirts, beige cotton wind-cheater jackets and flat-front Farah trousers are being seen on trendy young Britpop fans.

Nerdy zip-front cardigans and Sta-press action slacks have lost their cheesy connotations as a new generation rediscovers the value of easy-care fashions.

For high summer, go for trunk-style shorts that are square-cut with a metal buckle canvas belt or one with a snake-clasp and wear them with a simple, tight T-shirt.

Chunky Jesus sandals or basic tennis-shoes are popular for this look and original-style airline bags and schoolboy sports holdalls have made a comeback. To be part of the



true cognoscenti, wear socks with your sandals. Brown, toffee, burnt orange, burgundy, sky-blue and washed-out green mismatched in jazzy patterns are the colours to go for. Stripes are big too as are fine golfing checks or large-motif stars.

The image of these clothes may have once had a bad press but the new way of putting it all together is modern and not at all retro.

Photographs: Richard Burns. Grooming: Sally Kneilhelm for Jo Hansford (0171-495 7774). Styling: Amandip Uppal.



ABOVE: Coral suede safari jacket, £322, John Rocha, Liberty, W1; Harvey Nichols, SW1; Jenners, 48 Prince's St, Edinburgh (0171-734 0123). Blue corduroy trousers, £30, Principles, branches nationwide (0171-927 1443)

LEFT: Beige cord jacket, £135; matching trousers, £49.95, Jigsaw Menswear, 9-10 Floral Street, WC2; 75-80 King St, Manchester (0171-240 5651). Orange knitted tank-top, £155, Paul Smith, 41-44 Floral St, WC2 (0171-379 7133). Tan sandals, £54.99, Lambretta, Natural Shoe Store, 21 Neal Street, WC2; G.Shock, 55 Neal Street, WC2 (01604 847098)

LEFT: White/blue/grey V-neck vest, £49, John Crummy, 43-45 Shorts Gardens, WC2 (0171-240 3534). White stretch black stripe shorts, from £39, Emporio Armani, 191, Brompton Road, SW3 (0171-823 8818)

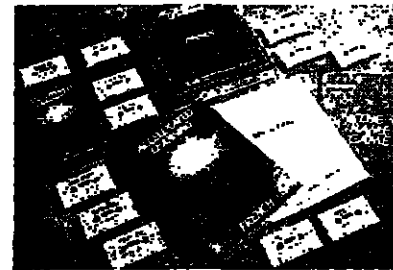
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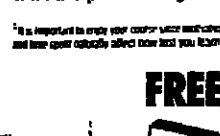
There are parts you can practise in the car and even a part where the story is repeated to music, a technique that involves the left brain (words & logic) and the right brain (music and creativity). The words become as easy to remember as a song.

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RIGHT: Black swivel hat, £295, Herald & Hart Hatters, 131 St Philip St, SW8 (0171-627 2414)



ABOVE: Black straw, white arrow hat, from £600, to order, Philip Treacy, 69 Elizabeth Street, SW1 (0171-259 9605)

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GARDEN ANSWERS



STEPHEN ANDERTON
replies to readers' letters

Q A gale blew down a thorn tree into which grew a *Rosa filipes* 'Kiftgate' and I have cut the remaining rose down to 6ft. Should I plant another tree where the rose stands, or move it to grow into a very old 'Beauty of Bath' apple? It is a very windy garden. — Mrs R.A. Burn, Wundridge, Suffolk

A 'Kiftgate' is outrageously vigorous and I cannot think of a tree fast-growing enough to escape the clutches of this established rose. You would need to keep the rose off the young tree for five to six years before letting battle commence. If all you need is a fast-growing climbing frame for the rose, put in a 3ft *Alnus rubra*, a fairly unremarkable species of alder, which will make 25ft in four to five years and then slow down. Alternatively, dig out the 'Kiftgate' and plant a smaller rose which will not smother a new small tree. Or, you could just let the 'Kiftgate' grow on its own; it will round up as high as a thorn tree without much trouble.

Q My huge, 20ft lantern tree, *Crinodendron hookerianum*, is looking sad, despite recent mild winters, and gales have browned the tips of the leaves. When and how could I prune the several thick trunks? — Mrs J.P. Woodward, Anglesey

A This tree does not respond well to heavy pruning of old boughs. It would be interesting to hear other readers' experiences with it. I would cut down low one or two of the front branches next February or March, choosing those whose absence will admit light to the base of the plant. Make sure it does not have a dry year, and see what happens. Successful regrowth can then lead on to

cutting the other trunks over the next two to three years. A height of 20ft is big for a lantern tree, and it may be that yours is gradually coming to the end of its life. You may prefer to let it go gracefully, take cuttings, and replace it when it finally goes. Plants from cuttings flower even when small, so you will not be long without those drooping red lanterns.

Q We have a garden on a Welsh hillside and the soil is poor. We cannot get horse manure, but there is lots of sheep manure around. Is it worth using? — Dr R. Martin, Manchester

A I can never bring myself to call dry little sheep droppings 'manure'. I always think of manure as steaming and sloppy, and by the time it reaches the gardener — well mixed with straw. Sheep droppings have none of the fibre of stable manure (cow or horse) and so the result is less useful in terms of building soil structure. On the other hand, it is a useful fertiliser, and on poor soil every little helps. Putting a few lumps around plants in need of a lift works perfectly well — and I find it deters rabbits from grazing just at that spot. About 2in-3in of sheep droppings left in a bucket of water makes an excellent liquid feed. Dilute to the plants' taste, and keep a lid on the bucket for the sake of nasal decorum. Sheep droppings would also make an excellent addition to your garden's compost heap.

● Readers should write to:
Garden Answers, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9GN. We regret that it may not be possible to deal with every request. Advice is offered without legal responsibility. The Times also regrets that any enclosures cannot be returned.

Helping hand for hire

Stephen Anderton on the problems of finding the right part-time gardener to look after your precious plants

If only I could find some real help with the garden," goes the cry. "Someone to come in one afternoon a week, or even a day, who knows what to do and can be relied upon to get on with it." The cry is not uncommon. Finding a skilled part-time gardener is difficult. "I can find basic help," people say, "but what I need is someone who knows the plants: someone who won't weed out things I've planted, my treasures: someone who can prune well."

It is a serious gap in the job market. I have known older people, keen gardeners, even leave the house and garden they have spent a lifetime creating rather than see it deteriorate — even when they can afford help.

And there's the rub: money. How much should you pay for a gardener? Perhaps £10-£12 an hour for someone who really knows his alliums? A liver for someone who'll do a perfectly reasonable job? About £3-£4 for a pair of hands? It might sound a lot, but you could pay £7-£12 an hour for work from a large landscape contractor, because of all his commercial and administrative costs. In central London, it could rise to £25 an hour, not least because of parking costs.

The gardener in me believes that I cannot begrudge a really good freelance gardener his £10 an hour — that's £21,000 a year, with no pension and no security, working come rain, come shine, and come back-ache when he or she is sorry.

A year ago Martyn Hird was a working head gardener with 20 acres of rare trees and shrubs in his care. Now he is freelancing three days a week from his home in Crawley, West Sussex. The other two days he looks after his baby daughter, Jessica, because his wife works full-time.

He has just a handful of clients, and can earn £80-£100 a day. But is he worth it? The answer has to lie in the fact that he never needs to adver-



Martyn Hird gave up a head gardener's job to go freelance. He works three days a week and can earn £80-£100 a day.

tise, such is the demand for skilled freelance gardeners, even on the stately home circuit, where the best jobs are filled by word of mouth.

Mr Hird, 35, studied City and Guilds Horticulture while

working in a parks department, before taking a diploma at Askham Bryan College in Yorkshire. He then worked for two years at Levens Hall, that marvellous topiary garden in Cumbria, and for a year at Borde Hill in West Sussex under the then head gardener John Humphries, who is now chairman of the Professional Gardeners' Guild. Finally, his abilities got him the job of a head gardener in Sussex, where he stayed for 11 years.

Mr Hird is an indefatigable visitor of gardens, as all working gardeners should be. I first met him ten years ago, when he spent his holiday fortnight driving a Luton van through-out Britain, collecting plants from his head gardener cronies for the guild's show garden at the Glasgow Garden Festival. His business

card now says, "Martyn Hird, Professional Gardener." "Not 'Landscape Gardener'," he says, "because I can find myself doing anything from growing tomatoes to designing and planting a large herbaceous border."

Mr Hird also likes to apply the same principles to a small garden as he did to one of 30 acres.

Some of his clients want him simply to keep the garden tidy and to a high standard of maintenance for 365 days a year. Others, with perhaps a few acres of garden, employ him to undertake major developments during the winter, and these, especially, are the clients with whom he hopes to stay for a number of

years to see the results of their collaboration. This kind of work is important because a freelance gardener needs employment in vile, cold January just as much as in the easy growing months.

Maybe the clever client is one who knows how to hang on to his gardener, and to make full use of his talents in every season. But does Mr Hird think he is worth £10 an hour? "People are paying for my knowledge and my skills. I have had enough offers to work five days a week if I wanted; but until Jessica is older I shall stick to three. Surrey and Sussex are far from being poor areas, so I should be all right. And I make sure I am reliable. I tend to take over from people who charge £5 an hour and don't always turn up. I am

FINDING HELP

FIRST ASK YOURSELF...

- ☐ Do I expect him/her to know more about gardening than me? For example, who decides when things need dividing, or sowing, or pruning?
- ☐ Do I need an ornamental plant lover and plantsman, or a good vegetable and cut-flower grower, or just someone to tidy up?
- ☐ How much can I afford to pay a week?
- ☐ Whose tools will be used, his or mine?
- ☐ Will he do any necessary spraying, or will I — or will it be all organic?
- ☐ Do I want him/her here on a day I am at home to explain things, or should he be more or less able to get on with it while I am out?
- ☐ Do I want all jobs tidied up at the end of each day, or each week for the weekend?
- ☐ Do I want someone flexible enough to work more some weeks and less at other times?

ASK THE GARDENER...

- ☐ Can you achieve the needs I've listed above?
- ☐ Show me any qualifications you have, including the vital certificate for pesticide use if I choose to spray.
- ☐ What, exactly, do you know about plants? What is your experience elsewhere? Can you give me a couple of phone numbers of other people you have worked for (if he/she has not been recommended to you)?
- ☐ Have you seen the kinds of plants in my garden? And what do you think of them?
- ☐ Are you good with machines and engines?
- ☐ What skills do you pride yourself on?
- ☐ Would you prefer to spend all day behind the lawn mower, or keep the borders immaculate?

AND THEN...

- ☐ Consider whether you would get on together.
- ☐ Agree day and hours of work, lunch periods and so on, and a procedure for what will happen if he/she cannot come on a particular day. Agree hourly rate of pay.
- ☐ Put all this into writing for you both to refer to.

always there on the agreed day for the agreed hours.

"Of course, it can be a lonely business, working on your own all day, instead of with other gardeners. But for this I don't need henchmen. All I need is good health, a private pension and a car to get me there. That's why I am cheaper than upmarket contractors."

And he's right. He might miss the long-term satisfaction of running a large garden open to the public, but if he can earn more money in less time this way, then perhaps he is right to choose the freelance life.

The irony is that any head gardener could be tempted away from an important garden by freelancing. It is fine for Mr Hird's clients, but a sad day for some of the smaller historic gardens.

DEAD & GONE.

DAY 1

DAY 2-4

DAY 5-7

DAY 10-14



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A collector's park reborn



Woburn is one of England's most majestic parkland settings, and this weekend it stages a festival of gardening

■ Kingston Bagpuize House, Near Abingdon, Oxfordshire (01865 520259)

Off A420 at Kingston Bagpuize, on A415 to Abingdon. Open today, tomorrow and Monday, and June 11, 14, 15, July 9, 12, 13, Aug 6, 9, 10, 23, 24, 25, Sept 3, 6, 7, 17, 20, 21. All 2.30-5.30pm (last entry 5pm). £1, children under five free.

The house makes an impressive statement when first seen from the road, facing on to a broad sweep of lawn and a beech avenue that crosses the road. In the past two years, much renovation has been carried out in the garden that was built up into a considerable plant collection by Marlie Raphael, who lived here from 1930 until 1960. She extended the garden beyond the existing formal lawns and borders in front of and to the north of the house to create the woodland garden and the large shrub border that lies on the far side of the garden park.

The division between the main lawn, with yew hedges, a fountain and mixed rose and perennial borders, is marked by a raised terrace walk that most probably pre-dates the existing house, leading to an 18th-century gazebo. As well as extensive replanting in the woodland garden,

garden park and shrub border, there has been identification work of the numerous rare species that Miss Raphael collected, or was given by her gardening friends.

■ Woburn Abbey, Woburn, Bedfordshire (01525 290666)

Signed from M1, Private garden and maze open this Monday, maze only, Aug 17, 11.30am-4.30pm; National Gardens Scheme admission £1. The park only, daily Mar-Nov, 10.30am-4.30pm; Sat and Sun in Jan-Feb, 10.30am-3.45pm. £5 a car.

The house stands in one of England's most majestic parkland settings, still grazed by deer. This weekend, a festival of gardening, with a good quantity of horticultural and other gardening stands, will be staged in the main car park. On Monday, the private gardens are open.

The hornbeam maze is the most impressive and unusual feature to be discovered, but there is also the mixture of herbaceous borders and roses, which will be on the brink of flowering, as will the water lilies in the pools.

■ Llysindin, Newbridge-on-Wye, Powys (01597 860200)

Near Llandrinod Wells, west of A49 at Newbridge, cross River Wye, entrance on right up hill. Open Mon and Aug 10, 2-6pm. £2, children free.

I first visited Llysindin more than ten years ago and not only does it retain the same sense of discovery for the visitor, but also the charm of an undisturbed establishment. The white-painted house faces over lawn and mature trees to a breathtaking view over the Wye Valley to the Welsh hills. On one side, the lawns merge into woodland and a walk leads between banks of rhododendron and azalea.

Beyond a gateway in a yew hedge lies perhaps the most delightful area, the enclosed kitchen garden whose central path slopes gently downhill to a gateway whose piers topped with stone balls perfectly frame the view out over the valley. Flower borders and orderly plots of vegetables are arranged around a central wooden pergola draped with vines and other climbers, and here Llysindin's rare collection of seduction and unspoilt setting is at its best.

GEORGE PLUMPTRE

If you have a grand design but space is limited, it pays to choose your plants carefully, says Nigel Colborn

The small garden with big ideas

Forget the vine weevils, shrug off the drought — these are but minor afflictions. A much more serious problem, and one which seems to preoccupy almost every gardener, is lack of space. Making the wisest and most artistic use of a garden — even a large one — is a challenge enough, but if yours is small, and you want to maximise its use, you will have to make some tough decisions.

But a small garden need never be limited. The boundaries are merely lines within which the artistic creation is to be set, and a tiny backyard can be as delightful as a couple of acres in the country. To achieve spectacular results simply choose the best plants.

Can't design is important to give the impression of space. Empty pathways that disappear around corners, double-acting vistas which look different from opposite ends and arches which give the impression of being entrances but lead nowhere all help expand the sense of space.

Planting schemes need shape and structure. Designers and gardeners often talk about a garden needing "good bones", meaning that a strong outline is essential. If the bones are not well knit and well proportioned, the flesh — or fill-in planting — will not be comely. Plants' natural dynamism will need exploiting, not merely allowing for seasonal changes, but getting the timing right so that as the months go by, a series of colourful climaxes will be separated by quieter spells.

Hedges make bones, of course, as do carefully placed shrubs or trees. But in a small garden, you need to ponder on what that particular tree or hedge will contribute in the off-season. Traditionalists swear by yew, for example, the topiars' dream plant, clippable to any shape and a good dark colour to back pretty borders, but in a restricted garden you may prefer something livelier, that flowers, bears berries or at least changes. Beech is a gentle, neutral green in summer, but makes a delicious tan contrast with dark-winter evergreens.

week by week, that makes the whole thing work. The barriers and screens which divide the area are effective because they provide extra vertical surfaces on which to grow plants. And where one climber would suffice, three or four would be better, especially if they were selected to do different things — flower, leaf, berry — in different seasons.

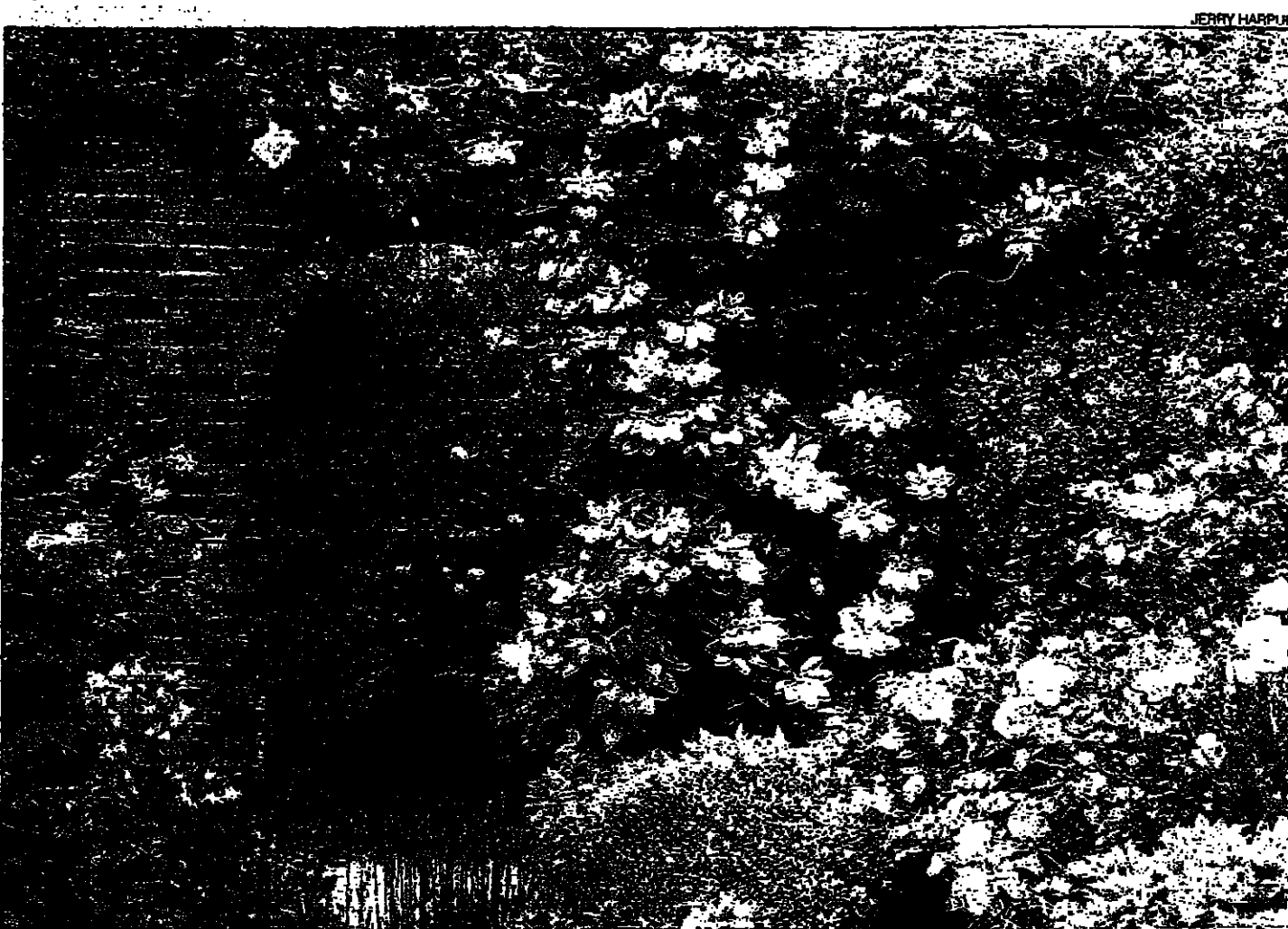
In a tiny garden, every planting opportunity must be exploited. Group containers where digging is impossible; wall bases or dark corners can be colonised by drought lovers or ferns; paving cracks can be furnished with durable plants and a roof can carry houseleeks or succulents. Views from windows are important and it can even be part of the planter's brief to connect interiors and exteriors by co-ordinating window-sill plants with borders outside.

Once the outline is in place, you can tinker about with in-fill plants. Contrasting with colours and textures becomes fun, using flower, foliage and fragrance to create a whole series of moods and flavours. Your choice of plants is important, but not half so much as how you arrange them.

In shade, pale flowers and bright foliage provide highlights but in well-lit areas they might look washed out or tawdry. Strong hot colours — scarlet and orange — will fade as night falls, killing joy in a border unless there are white or cream flowers to take over in the twilight. A blood red rose or peony glows in the sun, but in shade you don't even see it.

So out of the 60,000 varieties in cultivation, which plants will you select for your small garden? No easy choice, especially if, as for most gardeners, they nearly all appeal. The answer is to limit the choice to what might be termed "great" plants.

Greatness comes from a combination of attributes. First of these is



Design is important. Arches which give the impression of being entrances but lead nowhere all help expand the sense of space

Best in a limited space

■ *Acer japonicum* 'Vitifolium'. Small tree. One of the best small maples with vivid green foliage, comely shape and rich gold autumn colour.

■ *Clematis* 'Bill McKenzie'. Climber. A vigorous orange-peel clematis with large yellow lantern-like blooms and masses of fluffy seedheads. Best of a good group (almost all clematis are great plants).

■ *Dianthus* 'Doris'. A modern border pink, soft salmon with darker carmine flower centres, sweet fragrance and perpetual habit. Excellent for cutting.

■ *Eschscholzia*. Californian Poppy. Annual. Hot, cheerful colours from salmon to vivid orange, dependable flowering, even in hot, dry conditions. Good modern selections include 'Mission Bells'.

■ *Fuchsia magellanica*. Shrub, but can be cut back as perennial. Common in mild western districts, but sought-after in the cold east. Endless succession of slender wine red and damson flowers on slender branches.

■ *Helleborus* 'Oriental Hybrids'. Herbaceous perennial. Evergreen. Bold, five-petalled February flowers in colours ranging from sombre purples through greenish pinks to clean white. Some blooms are spotted or stippled.

■ *Ilex aquifolium* 'Green Pillar'. Tree. A neat, upright version of traditional Christmas holly. Proliferate with berries if there are male plants in the vicinity.

■ *Prunus incisa* 'Kojonoma'. Dwarf shrub. A tiny cherry with sugar pink blossom, venerable gnarled branches and vivid tan, rust and red autumn colour.

■ *Viburnum farreri*. Shrub. Most graceful of the winter-flowering shrubs with pale pink or white blooms, richly fragrant, appearing from November to January.

■ *Viola cornuta*. Mat-forming perennial. Constant run of pretty blue violet blooms, each with a small horn at the back of the petals. Vivid blue, but also available in white. 'Alba' or pale lilac blue 'Lilacina'.

WEEKEND TIPS

- Check gooseberry bushes for mildew and sawfly caterpillars, which defoliate a bush in two days. Spray with derris or malathion.
- Cut off strawberry plant runners. Remove sideshoots from indoor tomato plants, and keep well fed.
- Tall herbaceous plants, such as delphiniums, which need support later should be staked now. Dahlias can be planted and, in the south, bedding plants may be set out in the ground and in pots. Divide polyanthus and primroses.
- Hungry climbers on walls, such as clematis, should be given fortnightly liquid feed to ensure adequate moisture at the roots and abundant flowers later.
- To weaken and kill bracken, cut down stalks at about 18in high, just as the side branches start to expand. Several years of this starves the plant to death without the use of chemicals.
- Crocus leaves in rough grass can be mown now.

relatives, however, sport fancy seed heads — like a court jester's hat — and handsome, dark early foliage which contrasts well with tulips. Cherries wear their finery for a week, but one species, *Prunus sargentii*, follows its pink blossoms with red and russet autumn foliage, shiny bark and a handsome winter outline.

Rules, though, are made for breaking. Regardless of suitability, everyone includes at least a few plants that they love — and why not? Despite their vulgarity, I go for those big Dutch crocuses. Not only do they flower at a foul time of the year but who could fail to be moved by the cheerful pyjama stripes on their petals? And to go with them, a virus-prone shrub that is neither great, nor even showy, but for sweetness of fragrance and modest charms is more beautiful than the most sophisticated lily or orchid: the common daphne, *Daphne mezereum*, which, when I was tiny, wafted its scent through my nursery window. I've never lived in a garden without it.

you can cut them hard back after flowering and put summer flowers — pelargoniums perhaps — into the resulting gap.

Off-season beauty is important. The Chinese tree peonies, also weekend wonders, are ravishing in full bloom, but have ugly, stumpy winter outlines. Their herbaceous

beauty, or if you prefer, character. Grace of shape and form are important, as is growth habit, but the beauty has to be sustained. Penstemons, for example, bloom riotously from June to frost. Versatility helps: oriental poppies, though gorgeous, are too short-lived to deserve space, except that

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GREAT Plants for Small Gardens by Nigel Colborn is published by Conran Octopus on May 29, and is available to readers for £15.50, instead of the recommended price of £17.99. To order your copy call 01733 371999 with credit card details, or send a cheque, payable to Reed Book Services, to Conran Octopus Direct, 43 Stapleford Road, Orton Southgate, Peterborough PE2 6TD, quoting H234.

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6 • gardening



A manoir for all seasons

Jane Owen talks to the French-born chef about his obsession with creating the perfect garden and the problem of furry intruders

They were so beautiful, so young, and one night they were ravished. Overnight. All of them," says Raymond Blanc, the French-born chef whose accent can cause the most slovenly soufflé to rise; an accent he has failed to lose in 25 years of feeding the rich in Britain. He is talking about young vegetables and their assailants — rabbits. "But I understand the rabbits," he says. "When they saw these perfect courgettes, spring greens and broccolis, they knew they were the best: so young, so tender, so sweet, and that is why they ate them. I had educated the rabbits. I tried putting out leaves and other things for them to eat but they had learnt good taste. They wanted only my so beautiful young plants."

Pest control fanatics all have their favourite method — say, squash the rabbits at full moon and

dangle the bodies over the marrows — but M Blanc's approach to rabbit control at his hotel and restaurant, Le Manoir aux Quat Saisons near Oxford, is something else. "I looked for the final solution: I shot, ferreted and gassed," he says. "In the end I planted a wire-mesh fence that goes 30cm underground."

Every day, even in winter, M Blanc roams his garden, sometimes using a dictaphone to message his head gardener, Anne Marie Owens. "I spend half an hour a day in the garden, early in the morning or late, sometimes when it is dark. It is an introspective time. I get ideas. It is quiet. I think."

If he can't make the Manoir's weekly staff meeting, at which the kitchen staff fantasise about the new herbs and vegetables they need and the garden staff explain why they can't be grown, he insists on seeing the minutes.



At Le Manoir aux Quat Saisons in Great Milton, Oxford, Raymond Blanc spends thinking time in his formal herb garden (top left) and Japanese garden (above)

ME AND MY GARDEN: RAYMOND BLANC

where the tastiest produce is demanded, especially as M Blanc puts it, the "pure and noble bean: my father was so particular never to have vulgar or fibrous beans".

Beyond the orchard where in spring a sea of pale purple crocuses light the ground under one of two old apple trees, and beyond the traditional English garden, the pond and the vegetable garden, is a Japanese garden. It has a carp pond and tea house, and pine trees in the process of being trained in the Japanese style. But it is the least convincing area of the garden partly because the boulders, which can take Japanese designers years to choose, do not suit the place.

The Japanese garden is peaceful and calm," says M Blanc, who certainly needs tranquillity: he is twice divorced, having recovered from a stroke, still hands-on in the kitchen and battling over expansion plans.

Today, M Blanc no longer has time to work in the garden; he has "given up the shovel". But when he was a child in Saône in eastern France there was no choice. "I used to hate gardening," he says. "It gives me such painful memories. My father made me do harvesting and podding and planting trees. Never the creative work. I had to remove the weeds and the stones."

He later took revenge with a curious decoration in the middle of his father's lawn: a circle of irregularly shaped stones, with

wild flowers planted in their cracks. But in the nearby woods, the young Raymond, "kept pure on a diet without television or pornography", would roam "in rhythm with the seasons. In summer, wild raspberries would cascade by the million. Ruby red, they clung to the trees."

It was a different story when he bought the Manoir. The vegetable garden, then his chief concern, was a mass of ground elder and nettles. "And dead brussels sprouts," he says. "So English. This is the epitome of bad cuisine and bad gardening. A kitchen garden was essential. That project and restoring some of the garden, cost £750,000. "It was a labour of love."

Now there are 80 varieties of herb — including unusual oriental ones and lemon grass — and 150 varieties of vegetable. The garden is all organic and, by next year, M Blanc is hoping to have attained a Soil Association certificate to give official recognition to his organic methods, which is another of his great passions.

M Blanc has great plans for the garden. Next year, he will plant potatoes and cabbages and other crops in a six-acre field so that fresh vegetables can be served throughout the year. The polytunnels will be replaced by £600,000-worth of glasshouses, home to peaches, apricots, grapes and vegetables. Guests will be invited to view. The rest of us will just have to use our imagination.

• The gardens of Le Manoir aux Quat Saisons, Great Milton, Oxford OX44 7PD (01864 278828) are open only to guests of the hotel or restaurant.

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Rural idyll: Bearslake Inn, a thatched longhouse converted from old farm buildings in the Dartmoor National Park, is the stuff of a thousand chocolate boxes

Bearslake Inn, in the Devon hamlet of Lake, should be visited only on a miserable winter afternoon with the sleep sweeping down off the barren granite tors of the Dartmoor National Park that rise just behind this old stone, thatched longhouse. Even then there is precious little chance of keeping a grip on the commonsense that would stop you saying, "Where do I sign?" before the estate agent has unbuckled his seat belt. On a warm and gentle May morning you're done for — this is the stuff of a thousand chocolate boxes; even the most forbidding and unimpressed by global warming, was almost flirtatious, dressed in yellow gorse.

Unlike many Devon inns, this one did not start life as a coachman's rest or smoke-blackened smugglers' den, but evolved from 20th-century free enterprise. Originally part of the Leawood Estate where, until recently, tenants still paid their ten-shilling rents on Lady Day and at Michaelmas, these farm buildings were saved from demolition in the 1960s by a Mr Sweet, who spotted the commercial potential of passing by constantly stopping to photograph his beautiful property, and his old Alvis cars. The long-suffering Mrs Sweet was promptly ordered to produce cream teas on demand in the 17th-century beamed stone barn, now the bar with pews rescued from a church on the moor.

Commenced spread to the adjoining dairy, shippen and three "farmhouse" cottages which, forming a line of small rooms interspersed by timber-framed openings in the 5ft-thick walls, became a lounge, offices, breakfast room and kitchen. Passing through wicker rather than doors is spickily, as no doubt Annie, the resident ghost of a Victorian maid who fell downstairs and broke her neck, could confirm; but alas she doesn't communicate, merely thumps about a bit in the dead of night and means no harm; they never do in houses for sale.

The inn on the park



Above: a dairy, shippen and three farm cottages were converted for inn use and are interlinked by timber-framed openings in the 5ft-thick stone walls. Left: low, old beams, a wooden staircase and inglenook fireplace in the hall

Faded sepia photographs, rescued from the loft of the farm's horses, mop-capped milkmaids, ditchers in flat caps and rabbit trappers with leather gaiters, show a vanished rural society.

The photos also prove how little the buildings have changed, though the owner's separate, shaded farmhouse originally had a galvanised tin roof as a symbol of prosperity, that, being a cheap by-product of the farm.

Parts of the inn date from the 13th century, with trap doors and hidden staircases; gently undulating floorboards; rough, plastered walls that are strangers to spirit levels; enough exposed beams, some at concussion-height, to build a man-of-war; no-nonsense fireplaces with bread ovens and roughly hewn granite mantles stubbornly resistant to tarting up. Farmworkers were not much given to delicately carved panelling

and fancy cornices and there are virtually none of those little prissy features pounced on by interior designers. If you feel the need for an ever-changing witty decor to express your personality, this Grade II listed building would be limiting to the point of suffocation.

Bearslake is not typical: most farm buildings sought greater shelter away from the moor, but here you cross the back lawn past the fast-running stream, scooped out

where the Sweet grandchildren bathed, and the new season's strawberries and raspberries, straight to the bride path that leads on to the moor, without your feet touching an inch of Tarmac.

Sitting just inside the National Park border guarantees that your view won't be blighted by a superstore, but it does add another layer of heritage bureaucracy to wrestle with should you want to fiddle with the building's fabric. The owners, Ray and Thelma Taylor,

were denied permission to tidy up a tatty tin-roofed lean-to because this was declared "part of old Devon".

The inn, with its six letting rooms, is being sold for £295,000. In the commercial market, the bottom line that dictates selling price is annual turnover. The Taylors have a splendidly relaxed attitude: they baulked at spending their semi-retirement slumped exhausted over the Aga, slaves to profit margins, and have been content to let the inn bring in enough to bankroll renovations and the building of the large dining room.

The clientele for a drink, tea, a meal or a bed are still the passing trade lured off the road, as in the days of Mr Sweet. On a May Monday morning, an Age Concern coach party, all white hair and white cardigans, stopped for coffee; lunch guests were from Brisbane, Teignmouth, Virginia, Oklahoma and Okehampton. The menu included soup and sandwiches, home-

made pies, steak with Stilton cheese and fresh lobster — but no Cornish pasties because the French chef refuses to serve them.

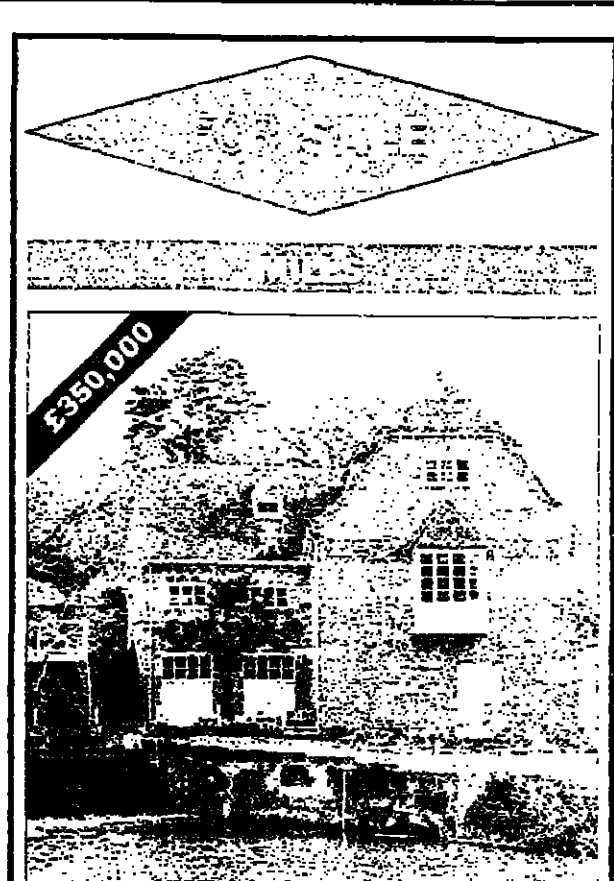
Five of the large A-framed en suite letting rooms, converted from the hay loft, saddle room and stable, have separate entrances. They are almost sparsely furnished, but the hillwalker, dripping with Dartmoor mist and mud, whose priorities are unlimited hot water and a decent bed rather than country house ambience, might put a severe strain on more upmarket pale linen sofas and delicately embroidered counterpanes.

However, this property is what you want it to be: a rural home that welcomes travellers without fuss or advertising, a place to expand and launch the Marco Pierre White of the West; or to do what the Taylors once considered: convert the inn back into a private house and then, perhaps, let the rooms and farmhouse on a self-catering basis.

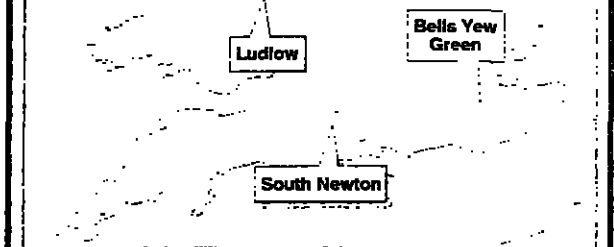
I'd go for the house conversion, though the estate agent felt obliged to drag me sharply back to reality by pointing out the hassles of planning permission, ripping out the industrial kitchen, and the lack of privacy and accessibility to tourists with cameras.

What the hell, I'd plant what I am sure would be an illegal, large boundary hedge and when the style police raided the premises, invite them in for a drink, but I wouldn't offer a Devon cream tea. Look what happened last time.

CHRISTINE WHEELER
Agent: Knight Frank, Exeter (01392 493101)



WILTSHIRE The Old Mill House, South Newton, Salisbury. Converted former medieval mill house overlooking a mill pond in the heart of the Wiltshire Valley. Five bedrooms, three bathrooms, mill room, drawing room, dining room, kitchen/breakfast room and utility. Large timber barn. About £350,000 (McKillop & Gregory, 01722 414747).



EAST SUSSEX Bartley Mill, Belle Vue Green, Frant. Pretty Grade II listed mill house and attached water mill in 42 acres of gardens, water meadows and paddocks, with views over the valley and a tributary of the River Tese. Four bedrooms, three bathrooms (one en suite), two reception rooms, study and kitchen. Mill with grain store, hursting room, mill shop, storerooms, cloakrooms and offices. Brick outbuilding and barn. Trout lake, fishing pond and mill pond. About £495,000 (Knight Frank, 01892 515035).



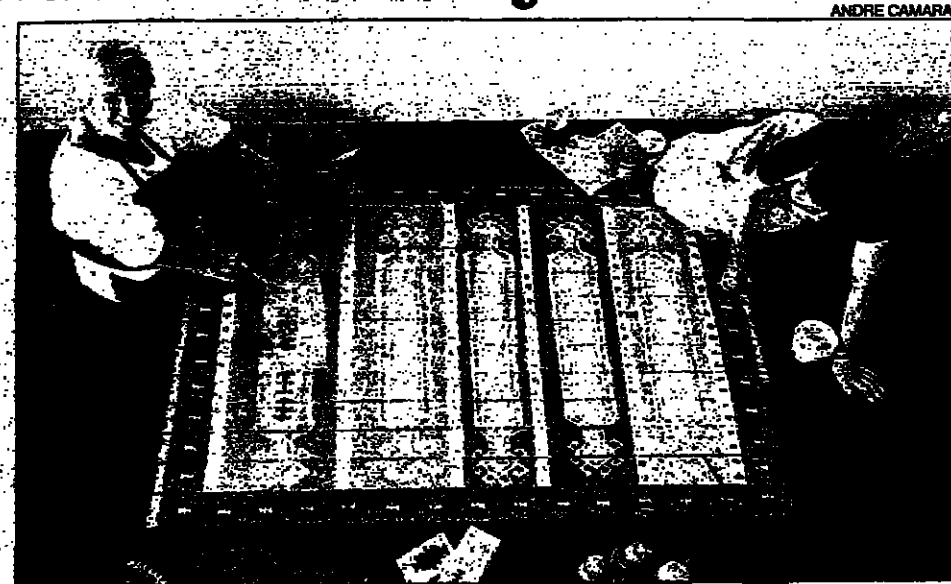
SHROPSHIRE Ludford Mill, Ludlow. Historic converted Grade II listed former mill in 1.5 acres of beautiful riverside gardens with tennis court and fishing rights on the River Teme. Six bedrooms, four bathrooms, sitting room, drawing room, kitchen/dining room and basement. About £290,000 (Knight Frank, 01432 273087).

CHERYL TAYLOR

Kilim me softly on the floor

ANDRE CAMARA

Why pay for an expensive Turkish carpet when you can paint one?



Nola Napier-Wilson (left) and Alexandra Abraham with one of their painted carpets

If carpets do not seem compatible with your family and pets, or you simply want a new look for an old floor, painting a carpet on the floor can be a great solution. They are forgiving to dirty shoes and muddy paws, can look stunning and are easy for amateurs to create.

Most floor types are suitable for painting, including cork, chipboard and floorboards. When painting a large area such as a floor, the aim is to create an overall effect rather than worrying about finer detail. For the cost of the emulsion, you can experiment with different styles and, if you don't like the look, you can simply paint over it and start again. Paint effects are fun and practical for kitchens and bathrooms — in other rooms you could experiment with a modern-prime rug or a rustic Turkish kilim which can be painted over a small area or cover the whole floor.

Nola Napier-Wilson and Alexandra Abraham have recently opened a studio, Special Effects, in Highgate, north

London, where they teach short courses in decorative finishes. One of their first steps, when decorating the studio was to paint tiles on the floor. Nola was so pleased with the result that she decided to paint a kilim on her bedroom floor. She says: "I love painted floors because they are durable, fun and inexpensive. The kilim in my bedroom is bright and reminds me of my holidays."

How to paint a kilim. Decide on the size of rug you want and choose your favourite design and colours. There

are many books with good photographs of kilims or you could look through oriental carpet store brochures. The less ornate patterns will be easier to achieve and may well look more effective.

A kilim can be painted using standard emulsion paints which will give a fairly flat finish. Tester pots of emulsion can be bought in most paint shops and are a cheap way to experiment.

Preparing your floor. The floor should be cleaned thoroughly as any wax or grease will make the paint separate. If you are painting on old chipboard, cork or floorboards, clean the floor with sugar soap to remove all grease. If the floorboards have been varnished, you will need to sand them — by hand or hire a sanding machine if you want a professional finish.

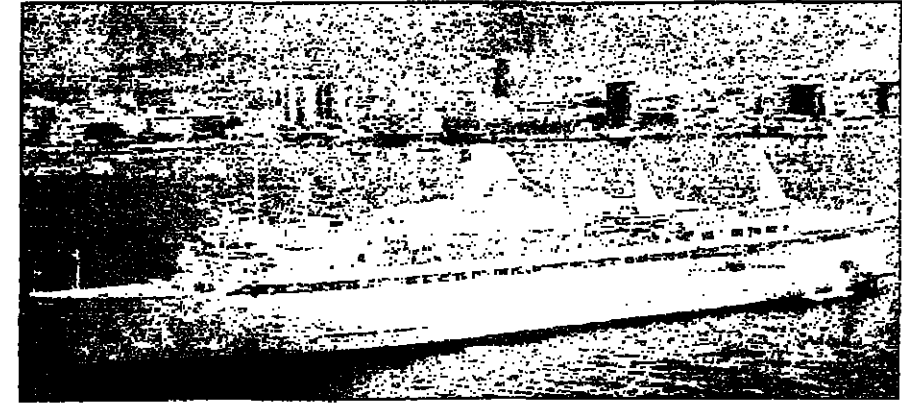
On with the paint. Most kilim patterns are symmetrical, with simple geometric designs and colours. Use tracing paper to make a

grid on your photo that will give you a guide to the positioning of motifs on your floor (for example, each photo square might be 2cm, which will equal 20cm on your floor). 2. Mark the borders of your rug on the floor with a light pencil and paint the area with two base coats of white emulsion. Leave to dry. 3. Paint on one coat of the background colour of the grid and leave to dry. 4. Use string and Blu-tak to mark out the squares of the grid to scale on your floor. 5. The kilim motifs can then be painted freehand onto the base colour. If you are not confident about painting freehand, cut out a stencil to paint inside. Do not worry too much about inaccuracies as most kilims have some irregular patterns. 6. To achieve a hardwearing finish, use a roller to apply three or four coats of a water-based varnish.

Contacts. For advice and products for painting a floor (mail order available) contact: Foxell and James, 57 Farrington Road, London EC1M 3JB (0171-405 0152 or 0171-405 2487). For further information on Special Effects decorative paint courses, contact: Special Effects, 251 Archway Road, Highgate, London N6 5BS, (0181-348 1152).

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VICTORIA TRAVEL, the gardening cruise specialist, has arranged a special package for *Times* readers, departing from Dover on the Black Prince on Sunday, November 23, 1997. The *Times* party on the 13-night cruise to Madeira and the Canaries will be led by Stephen Anderson, the gardening correspondent of *The Times*, and Ashley Stephenson, gardening expert. For bookings made by the end of July, prices start at £699 per person for a three berth cabin. Port charges, insurance, drinks and gratuities are extra. There are excellent restaurant, leisure and entertainment facilities on board the Black Prince which can carry 440 passengers.

National Express tickets from various UK mainland pick-up points to Dover are free. Readers in Ireland can enjoy free flights from Belfast and Dublin. For car drivers, there is free parking at Dover, and Victoria Travel can arrange subsidised overnight hotel rates.

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Droves of people who sell their homes are renting property while they look for a new house. Amanda Loose reports

Invasion of the stop-gap renters

In a property climate where sellers are afraid of missing out on increasingly buoyant prices, yet the scarcity of available houses and flats means they struggle to find something to buy, many people are turning to renting as a stop-gap solution.

As a knock-on effect, the cost of renting is escalating — prices have risen by up to 20 per cent in some areas over the past six months — according to Hamptons International, and agents across the country are telling the same story.

About 10 per cent of tenancies in the first three months of this year were taken by people who had sold houses but found nothing to buy, Hamptons International says.

London agents are inundated with stop-gap renters. Wetherells of Mayfair reports that the number of would-be stop-gap renters on its books has doubled in two months, while Douglas & Gordon lettings in Battersea is swamped by the overspill from its sales department.

Friend & Falcke in Chelsea reckons that 10 per cent of its tenants are renting because they have sold their homes at a high price and haven't been able to find anywhere to buy.

Agents out of the capital quote even bigger percentages. Alison Muller, of Knight Frank in Oxford, says that about 25 per cent of her tenants are stop-gap renters. Anna Sugden of Strutt & Parker lettings in Newbury, Hampshire, estimates that the number of people renting because they can't find anywhere to buy has risen by 30 per cent in the past year. About 80 per cent of the people she speaks to at the moment are stop-gappers.

"It's a real problem which has been building up over the past year," says Andrew Brown, of Clegg Kennedy Drew in Charlbury, Oxfordshire. "People are desperate. They have the money to buy after selling up, but can't find anywhere and aren't sure what to do next. They find the experience very unsettling."

Finding somewhere to rent can be almost as difficult, says Annabel Barnes of Hamptons. Tempted by the prices offered, 250 of Hamptons' landlords decided to sell up in the last quarter. So, with a shortage of

GUIDE TO EXCLUSIVE LETS

FOR THE price of a modest house in Pembrokeshire, you could rent one of London's top houses for a month. Lets of anything from £2,000 to a whopping £10,000 a week are becoming commonplace in prime London areas, according to Hamptons International.

Would-be tenants in Surrey have budgets of between £3,000 to £5,000 per calendar month, although some will pay up to £6,000, says Angela Reid, of Knight Frank in Esher.

Here is a selection of the country's most exclusive lets available:



Holland Villas Road, W14, to rent at £6,000 per week

■ Holland Villas Road, W14, £6,800 per week (furnished). Seven/ten bedrooms, seven bathrooms, swimming pool, Jacuzzi, studio flat. On the street where Tom Cruise recently rented a house for £10,000 per week. Hamptons International, 0171-937 9371.

■ 62 Chester Terrace, SW1, £8,000 per week (unfurnished). Six bedrooms. Knight Frank, 0171-629 8171.

■ Holland Villas Road, W14, £6,000 per week (furnished). Six bedrooms, swimming pool, staff flat. Egerton, 0171-584 7020/Weiherell, 0171-493 6935/De Groot Collis, 0171-221 8090.

■ Upper Phillimore Gardens, W8, £4,500 per week (unfurnished). Eight-bedroom house. De Groot Collis, 0171-221 8090.

OUT OF TOWN:

■ Patchesham Park, Oxshott, Surrey, £7,000 per month. Five bedrooms. Knight Frank, 01372 464496.

■ 18th-century manor house, Oxfordshire, £7,000 per month (furnished). Rent includes staff. Strutt & Parker, 01635 521707.

■ St Ann's Court, St Ann's Hill, Chertsey, Surrey, £3,500 per month (furnished). Seven bedroom house. John D. Wood, 0181-946 9447.

■ The Old House, Strettingham, near Chichester, £3,250 per month (unfurnished). Four bedrooms, annexe, swimming pool, tennis court. Cluttons, 01903 882213.

rental property in some areas, competition can be fierce.

"Rents are rising in the Home Counties because of the pressures of demand. Our Esher office recently let a large family house for £8,000 a month after competition between two potential tenants pushed up the rent from £7,500."

What you can expect to spend on rented accommodation will vary, but Ms Sugden warns potential tenants that they could be renting for up to a year while they buy, then

exchange and complete. Mr Brown estimates that a good family house, which many stop-gap renters want, will cost from at least £1,700 a month in his area, but many are happy to pay this.

There is another side to the story. Hamptons in Fulham, west London, cites a typical example of those who choose to rent and budget for the expense. The firm has just agreed a deal on a five-bedroom house, whose value has increased by £100,000 since Octo-



Ed Cunningham with his wife Sarajane and son Lachlan outside the house they are renting

A MOVING STORY

Ed Cunningham, an estate agent with Douglas & Gordon, moved into a four-bedroom rented house in southwest London at the beginning of the month with his wife Sarajane and young son Lachlan. In December they sold their Clapham home, with a delayed completion date until May 1.

"A local agent approached us last November and asked if we would be interested in selling. We said yes, and by the end of the month he had found a buyer. But we had to reject the offer because he wanted to move in by Christmas, which wouldn't have given us time to find anything else."

"We put the house on the market through Douglas & Gordon last December and the second viewer put in an offer over the £400,000 asking price very quickly."

"Finding somewhere to buy was a nightmare as the market was very strong at the end of 1996, but this year it has accelerated to unheard of levels. We lost two houses to private offers. One couple said we couldn't look round until Monday but had a dinner party on the Friday night and sold it to a couple there. We also put in an offer on a house in Clapham but it went to sealed bids for silly money."

"By mid-March we started to panic, and decided we weren't going to find anywhere by the beginning of May so we would look for somewhere to rent. But there's little available because everyone is in the same boat, and I was staggered by how high rents are. We saw five houses and eventually found one for £450 per week."

"We wanted to take it for six months, but had to agree to eight, because otherwise we would be coming out around Christmas, the worst time for a landlord to relet. By the time we've paid rent and furniture storage with interest from the proceeds of our sale, we will break even. But it's upsetting and Lachlan is very restless. Even for someone in the business, the whole process has been an education."

PROPERTY NEWS

■ THE FORMER home of Elton John at Belvedere Tower, Chelsea Harbour, west London is for sale for £11 million, Amanda Loose writes. The three-bedroom penthouse on the 15th floor overlooks the Thames. Contact Chestertons Residential on 0171-589 5211.

■ FIMLICO agents Danitons report that several Labour MPs are trying to buy in the area, close to Westminster, but so far they have had no instructions from former Tory MPs wanting to sell.

■ FLAT seven at Brandish House, Fulham, west London, will be familiar to fans of Channel 4's *Melissa*. Scenes from the drama were filmed there, and Knight Frank is asking for offers close to £495,000 for the flat, which has four bedrooms. Contact Knight Frank on 0171-824 8171.



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A good 5 bedroom farmhouse, over, house, gardens, swimming pool, 2 paddocks
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OXFORDSHIRE - Brightwell Baldwin Price Guide: £295,000
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cloakroom, utility room, conservatory, garage, garden.
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WEST SUSSEX - Sharpshorne Price Guide: £375,000
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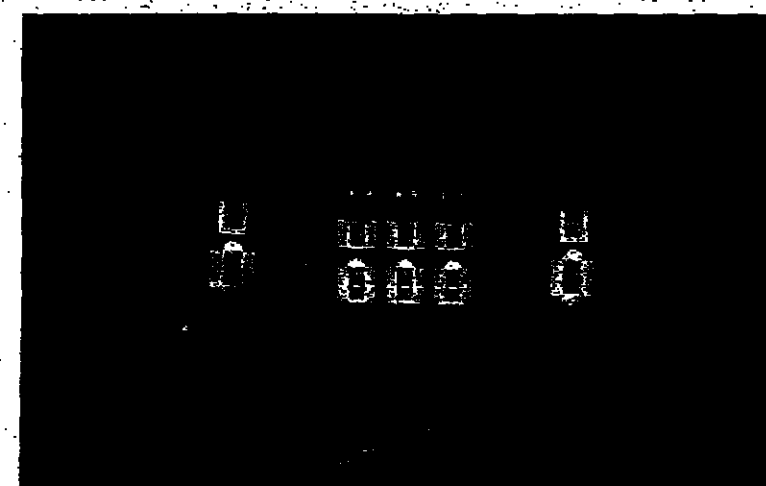
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EAST SUSSEX - Forest Row Price Guide: £600,000
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EAST GRINSTEAD: 01342 326326 HEAD OFFICE: 0171-493 4106



WATERSIDE POINT - Battersea, SW8 Lease to 2112 Price Guide: £650,000
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reception room, kitchen, cloakroom, porter, underground parking.
BATTERSEA: 0171-228 0174



OXFORDSHIRE - Burford Price on Application
A fine stud farm with exceptional stabling, Cotswold stone house, 4 bedrooms, bathroom,
3 reception rooms, kitchen, 3 bedrooms, bathroom, reception room, kitchen.
OXFORD AGRICULTURAL: 01865 311522

Welcome to the bolt-on homes

Say goodbye to the traditional house. The homes of the future will be cheap, high-tech and flexible. **Christine Webb** reports

The start of the new millennium is such a promising landmark, or time-mark, that traditional house-building methods suddenly seem old hat. So the building industry is planning dramatic new methods to lift housing into the 21st century.

Basic British house building has hardly changed over 40 years and is regarded by some as being slow and costly. To spark a rethink, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation held a conference in April at which the project 2000 Homes was launched.

This is run by a consortium which aims to build at least 2,000 prototype homes in the UK by the year 2000, trying out new ideas.

The 2000 Homes team should carry some clout: it includes the Housing Corporation, Peabody Trust, Guinness Trust, Royal Institute of British Architects, Science Policy Research Unit at Sussex University, Berkeley Homes, National House-Building Council, Rowntree Foundation and some leading manufacturers.

Coincidentally, the house builder Watnes has launched Project House 2000, to seek out key issues for housing, and the Berkeley Partnership has banded with some housing associations and local authorities to examine "smart" and "green" technology that has been approved but never widely used.

So far, such projects offer more questions than answers, but there are extraordinary ideas for them to explore. The 2000 Homes project wants its new houses to be flexible, sustainable, cost effective, innovative and high-tech. Most importantly, says its chairman, Professor David Gann of Sussex University's Science Policy Research Unit, people's needs should come first.

"Most houses are designed for Mr Average and there's no such thing: we want to give the needs of people who live in houses top priority," he says. "A house is something you invest your life in, you should be able to take more with you when you move."

More of the interior can become separate from the exterior, and that enables you to consider the interior differently and to do more to suit

your individual needs. For example, plug-in radiators could be taken when you move house.

Another idea occupying 2000 Homes is what might be described as "building by numbers" from factory-made parts. The Japanese are already streets ahead in this, and it is fitting that the car firm Toyota is a leading light in manufacturing Japanese homes, too, because the car makes a good analogy. Project leaders like most current British housebuilding to a 1965 Ford Anglia.

The Japanese buy houses like they buy cars. Land prices are high, but they scrap a house after 20 or 30 years, ordering a replacement in a shop where they can select from a computerised "catalogue" of new

cut for quick installation. Ken Bartlett, a Rowntree Foundation consultant, says that one Japanese house builder manufactures 70,000 homes a year, of which 21,000 are different types. Toyota already produces about 4,000 a year.

George Wimpey, Britain's biggest house builder, produced 12,000 homes last year. Rates of production are significant, because of the 4.4 million new homes that we will need in the next 20 years, and because of worries about the life-span of our housing stock.

"We have 19.1 million homes in England," Mr Bartlett says. "To give housing stock a life of 200 years, we need to replace at a rate of 120,000 a year. At the moment we're replacing at the rate of 8,000."

The Japanese don't necessarily produce cheaper homes, they offer better value for money. Pre-fab techniques certainly can decrease costs and increase standards once the production process is in place, because you're working in good conditions rather than on a muddy site. And they're quicker to erect.

Such ideas have been slow to take off here, although hotel groups have benefited from modular construction methods, that have slashed building schedules.

John Prewer, an architect, is involved in designing a demonstration pre-made, system-built block of flats that will be exported to Beijing, China. He is also using the same modules for a space-saving micro-flat project in which electrical appliances will be voice-activated and in which, at a press of a button, the sofa sinks into the floor while the bed unfolds out of a wall.

To save space, the flats' large windows, overlooking a balcony, will double as a television screen. "When you use the television, the glass goes electrochromic and changes from a window to a screen," Mr Prewer says. "Your computer screen can also be shown on this, or a virtual view, say, of Bondi Beach — we can even have the sound of waves breaking on the beach piped through speakers."

Mr Prewer says it is possible to stack weather-proof modules on top of each other up to seven storeys

high, so that each floor is one major room: "You can start off with a three-roomed house and, when you can afford it, buy another room to stack on top. It's very affordable in land terms because it has a tiny footprint. One company has identified factory-produced housing as the single biggest industry waiting to happen."

Dickon Robinson, the director of development at the Peabody Trust in London, a leading sponsor of 2000 Homes, admires Dutch experiments with concrete technology, which makes for fast building. He has also visited an avant-garde development outside Copenhagen, Denmark. "One block of flats there is built from 2in-thick sheets of steel, about one metre wide buried deep in the earth, with glazing

panels set in between. It creates an interior that needs no heating because the steel acts as a conduit from the sub-soil, which is warm in winter and cool in summer."

We are also investigating volumetric construction, in which as much as possible is built in the factory and erected on site. We may do a trial project north of the City in London to find out if we can produce acceptable homes and whether this method is cheaper — we would hope to make savings of at least 15 per cent.

It sounds as if one day we will buy our homes bit by bit, rather like the children buy Lego: a clip-on balcony this month, a pop-on conservatory bubble the next.

On a different tack, Taywood Homes has started building "flexi-homes" at a development in Rothwell, Leeds: houses are designed so that ceilings are continuous and electrical fixtures or plumbing are left off some non-load-bearing interior walls so that these can be removed easily. This enables a couple to buy a three-bedroom house but remove a wall later with a minimum of making-good to turn it into a two-large-bedroom house, and reverse the process for resale at three-bedroom prices.

Such innovations are unusual in Britain, and our strict planning laws might rule out some ideas. "The outcome of system-building in Japan is rather anarchic," says Bernard Hunt, the chairman of

2000 Homes. "By the year 2000 we want to stimulate people to build homes that are a shining example of what they should be. For example, we should look at remote central-locking for houses like that used for cars."

"Energy will be a big issue. You can now get glazing that produces energy; and if we were to use photovoltaic technology in all British houses, that would generate 40 per cent of our electricity needs."

"We're looking for a quantum leap in the experience of being in a house. We have a static idea of housing, though 12 per cent of buyers choose a newly built home. We'll definitely get our 2,000 new homes up by 2000, the question is will they be brilliant examples, or more ordinary?"



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Street markets are under threat. Can our craving to be wooed by stallholders, rather than be tricked with packaging and Muzak, save them?

In the age of the marketing man, marketing strategy, global marketing and supermarketing, what happened to real markets? A market is not a fanciful notion expressed across a desk, but the weekly coming together of traders under canvas awnings, braving all weathers to line the streets of market towns and shout incomprehensibly at passers-by. We mourn the passing of the village shop, post office, pub and school, but few concerns are ever raised over markets.

Perhaps because they don't deserve it. The traders are the last of the lovable rogues of the retail trade, giving every impression of being more than able to look after themselves. They are individuals and survivors. In rural towns, they meet once a week to form plucky gatherings brave enough to shoulder off any competition. We respect them for that but do not necessarily trust them.

Take your average street trader. Irrespective of his personal honesty, you harbour a traditional suspicion that he is somehow going to pull a fast one on you: surely, if he were a respectable man he'd do the decent thing and have a shop, wouldn't he? But he turns up, once a week and is gone before bedtime, only to reappear seven days later with a new and

These are the really super markets

better bargain about which he will harangue you. It is interesting that this has survived; after all, the market approach could not be further from the supermarket approach, where no one shouts at you, jokes with you, or makes you stand out in the rain while you get served. In fact, none of the supermarket staff seem to care whether you buy anything at all. So why is it that in an age when street markets, especially in small rural towns, should by rights have been consigned to the same compartment of history that contains the gas mantle and the lampbrush, weekly street markets are still to be found?

Possibly it is just our craving to be wooed, personally, into buying rather than be tricked with packaging and lighting and Muzak; more likely it has to do with our wanting, at least once a week, to live life on the edge. Supermarkets, religiously obsessed with quality control, would blush with corporate shame if they sold you a cabbage with a caterpillar in it. They would take full-

page ads in the national press to apologise and promise inquiries; there would be a statement from the Consumer's Association and indignation across the broadcast media.

A market trader, on the other hand, would give you another (grudgingly) and you, as customer, would know you had exercised the most finely honed quality control in the world, only achievable by looking the man who sold it to you and telling him it was rubbish. This is shopping in the raw.

I do it every Wednesday among the dozen or so small stalls which form the lingering heart of what was once a thriving local event. It used to be allied to a livestock market until that closed and

DOWN TO EARTH



PAUL HEINEY

this market to buy a fat pig, home again, home again, jiggy-jiggy, but associations with traditional market day remain unbroken. For example, an X-ray can still only be had on a Wednesday unless you want to drive 25 miles to the hospital. In the days of mass chest screening it was only worth doing if sufficient people could be persuaded to attend; why would

a farmer waste valuable petrol on coming into a town, if there wasn't anything to buy or sell? The habit survives, and so in this age of the medical miracle, anyone hereabouts twisting their ankle on a Thursday has to wait a week to discover the damage or take the long haul to town.

The arrival of the market stalls noticeably lifts the spirit of the town. It buzzes, whereas most of the week it snoozes. The street which six days a week smells only of exhaust, finds itself engulfed in a mixture of salty, tangy, smells from the stall that brings fish fresh from the sea. Next to it is the cheese stall, so the scent of fresh herring meets the gorgonzola. If the wind is in the north, this potent breeze is fortified by sprout and onion from the vegetable stall before descending on the hapless man at the very end, who sells knucklers in sizes beyond imagination.

With already two supermarkets in the town, there is an advancing plan to build

an ever bigger and better one. One wonders how many enemies the plucky street traders can fight off at one time. At least the existing shops are in the middle of town, and so the battle is fought in the same ring. The proposed development is to be out of town.

It will not attract the old men who stand on the street corners on Wednesdays as if they still had cattle to sell, but it is difficult to see the younger, motorising public making the double effort to pay a few pence less for a cucumber. Our market, like many others throughout the country, may die.

Of course, if the supermarkets were as public-spirited as they would have us believe, they would recognise the value of the market shopping tradition and once a week cordon off part of the vast parking lot with which they surround themselves for the tinned snails and the chip van. Or is it all too grubby, too much like real life for the manicured minds of the supermarket-keepers to contemplate?

Are they, perhaps, frightened that, given a sporting choice, shoppers might find the man with his box of cut-price, sprout-and-cheese scented bloomers is closer to people's hearts, minds and pockets than they are?

Readers' letters, advice on country matters, from wildlife to village life, people to politics. Write to: Paul Heiney, Weekend, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN

New Labour, new rambling routes?

Gareth Huw Davies on whether walkers in the country can look forward to more rights to roam

The walk into the view pictured on the right develops much like a Beethoven symphony: slow, reflective first movement at a car park in a dark wood; a hectic scherzo across a busy road; a gentle andante through a meadow and a short transition over a stile. Then, as you emerge out of some trees, a crescendo of brass to a jubilant finale.

Within a few strides, the view opens up from 50 yards to about 50 miles. The Chilterns scarp plunges away to the chequerboard Oxfordshire plain. In the middle distance, the Thames. In the misty beyond, the Cotswolds, arcing round to the Uffington White Horse on the Marlborough Downs in Wiltshire.

But if you wanted to pause to celebrate one of the finest views in southern England, you would have to do so without touching anything you see around you. Legally, the only place you may stop is here on the footpath. To stray an inch off the defined route is, technically, trespass.

On our immediate left and right are the Shireburn and Pyrron hills. These sweeps of open downland above Watlington in Oxfordshire are among the most fiercely disputed forbidden tracts of land in Britain. The ninth Earl of Macclesfield, whose Beechwood estate this is, has resisted all appeals to open them to the public.

He may not be able to resist for much longer. We don't know how many ministers in the new Government have enjoyed this view, but Kate Ashbrook, the chairman of the 120,000-strong Ramblers' Association, is confident that their accumulated commitments to legislate will soon give the public the freedom to roam these hills.

John Smith, the last Labour leader, was a keen rambler. His aspiration to give the public the right to leave footpaths and wander off into open countryside is shared by his former walking companion, Chris Smith, the new Heritage Secretary. The Minister for the Environment, Michael Meacher, said in a

speech in January 1991: "It is fundamental that there should be a right of access to... open countryside." And, in its general election manifesto, Labour promised "greater freedom for people to explore our open countryside". The subject wasn't mentioned in last week's Queen's speech, but the Ramblers' Association hopes that a promised consultation paper on access can be published by the autumn.

Today there was a spectacular eavesdropper to our conversation as we walked down the path. A red kite drifted overhead, eyes primed for a dead lamb or rabbit. The kite, blasted to extinction in England by Victorian guns, was recently reintroduced from its last refuge in Wales and is thriving.

"Those hills call to you to enjoy them," Ms Ashbrook says. "It's frustrating not to go on to that higher ground and see around the corner. It's so restricting to have to walk on a particular strip of land and not to be able to wander harmlessly and peacefully."

Ms Ashbrook has for years been an implacable campaigner for the right of walkers in England and Wales (the law is different in Scotland) to roam freely on open, privately owned land. She sees restricted access as the main constraint on the public's enjoyment of the countryside. Walkers could benefit from a new access law in "hundreds" of spectacular places which until now have been closed to them, she says. These include Yorkshire moorland with Brontë associations, the Berwyns (high moorland) in North Wales, parts of the Peak District and the Forest of Rowland in Lancashire.

In 1949, a Labour Government passed the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, opening up parts of England and Wales, mainly upland. However, that Act fell short of walkers' hopes where it applied to the wider countryside. Local authorities were left to survey open land and decide where to make access agreements. But few councils carried out the voluntary surveys. Only one access agreement, outside national parks, is thought to have been made.

The Ramblers' Association claims that the 1949 Act was specifically designed to give access to areas such as the Shireburn and Pyrron hills. Its confrontation with Lord Macclesfield is long running and bitter. The earl, formerly seat of the nearby Shireburn Castle, puts his case with fervour. "If you are going to be fair to the environment, you keep the bloody humans out," he says.

"We are almost two species, town and country. Town people, when they come out here, can't keep their mouths shut. The human voice drives wildlife away, whereas the countryman sees all sorts of things when he is by himself and quiet. And the ramblers say they clear up behind them, well they don't. We find rubbish on and off the footpath."

Lord Macclesfield argues that the right to roam would interfere with publicly funded tree planting and urgent estate management — such as culling deer and controlling pests — and would conflict directly with other legislation designed to protect the countryside; for example, the red kites, which nest on the estate, are safeguarded under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. "They are here because the place is peaceful," the earl

says. "They don't mind people walking down footpaths because that is routine. If you give free access, people will see them nesting and wonder over to see what is going on. And that will effect breeding."

Ms Ashbrook rejects this. "He has chosen the wrong bird there. The kite doesn't mind people. Besides, we will accept the standard prohibitions that apply in any open space — no fires, music, political meetings and so on. Signs could be put up at lambing time asking people to keep off. There is plenty of peaceful wandering we can do without interfering with anything."

Lord Macclesfield, who sits on the crossbenches, believes an access Bill could face some robust opposition in the Lords. He argues that Labour is weak on countryside matters in the Lords, citing a debate in December 1995 which he attended with 30 backbenchers — Conservative, Liberal Democrats and crossbenchers. "The Labour Party couldn't find a single backbench peer who had the combination of time and knowledge to speak on the countryside," he says. "They can't drag out their backwoodsmen for a debate — they haven't got any."

But the Country Landowners' Association, which opposes an access law while preferring voluntary agreements between ramblers and landowners, says Labour's manifesto commitment to "greater freedom to explore the countryside" did not constitute a promise to legislate over countryside access.

However, it is hard to see how a Government which has already said it will ban hand guns and tobacco advertising will hold back on such a potentially popular issue.

Ms Ashbrook, as if anticipating the result for which she has fought so long, strayed off the path to deliver a final word from the bottom of Shireburn Hill: "Now, at last, there's a chance of getting what ramblers thought they were being given 50 years ago. It could be in memory of John Smith. That would be wonderful."



Kate Ashbrook, the Ramblers' chairman, with Gareth Huw Davies: the country beyond is largely off-limits to walkers



ON THE SPOT: EDGE HILL, WARWICKSHIRE

Rural recommendations

The place: The octagonal Radway Tower on the ridge of Edge Hill. Built by Sanderson Miller (1750), based on Guy's Tower of Warwick Castle. The view: Below the beech-clad slopes is the wide Feldon plain of the Vale of the Red Horse. The forbidden acres of the largest ammunition dump in Europe hide the site of the bloody opening battle of the Civil War on October 25, 1642. The appeal: The puffing climb up one of the steep paths from Radway brings you a reward — the folly tower, which is incorporated in the Castle Inn. Enjoy the view from the garden then continue walking the paths (including the Centenary Way) through the billowing, hanging woods. Historical interest: Here Charles I raised his

standard before the fateful descent into the valley. He would have passed Radway Grange, home at the time of the Washington family. A later visitor was Henry Fielding, who came to the area to write *The History of Tom Jones*. The nearby church lists Earl Haig among its village heroes. Best time to visit: About this time of the year, when the beech trees revert to their delicate green hues. OS reference: 373474 (Landranger 151). Also nearby: Upton House (National Trust), with magnificent paintings collected by Lord Bearsted. Test-flying of first practical jet aircraft (Whittle E28/39) was at the long-redundant RAF Shenington.

RICHARD SHUREY

The buzz is, bee-eaters are back

FEATHER REPORT

IN MAY, all sorts of birds appear in Britain that are unlikely to be found here at any other time of the year. They are spring migrants to other parts of Europe that have either strayed too far west, or were supposed to stop in the south and overshoot the mark to end up on our shores. This week, quite a few bee-eaters were spotted in southern England. These were overshooters. Most bee-eaters nest around the Mediterranean, though their range has been stretching northward in the past 25 years and they are now found breeding regularly outside Paris.

I have a vivid memory of bee-eaters. It was some years ago when I was in what was then called the Canal Zone of Egypt. One April morning I was out on the shore of the Great Bitter Lake when suddenly the sky was filled with birds. They were swooping and gliding all round me, the sun gleaming on their brilliant blue wings, the air full of their brisk, liquid calls.

Many of them swept quite close past me, and I could see the rest of their dazzling plumage — their orange underwings and blue breasts, chestnut backs, yellow throats. There must have been 20 or 30 of them, and they were catching flying insects, now high in the air, now close to the sand. The birds' flight was extraor-

dinarily graceful, with long glides on stiff wings and sudden, deft turns.

They did not stay long, and the sky seemed strangely empty after they had gone. It had been almost like a vision on that desert shore. However, I did see them once or twice more that spring, always appearing unexpectedly and disappearing as abruptly. They were on their way north up the Suez Canal to somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean.

It was not bees they were catching that morning, but bees are their favourite food, and in some parts of Europe they can be a plague to beekeepers if they find a hive.

They are skilful at dealing with bees. They take them back to a perch — a fence or a telephone wire — and kill them by beating them against it a few times. Then they rub the corpse firmly against the perch to squeeze all the poison out of it.

THE BEE-EATERS breed in colonies, burrowing deep into sandbanks and quarries, and laying their eggs in a kind of dungeon at the end of the hole. They are one of those species that have a rather cruel-seeming defence against shortage of food when they are feeding their young — always

a hazard for birds that depend on flying insects, since their prey can completely disappear in wet weather.

The defence consists of laying their eggs at intervals of a day or two, but starting to incubate from the first egg. Most birds wait until their last egg has been laid before they begin incubating, so all the eggs hatch together. With bee-eaters, and other birds such as swifts, which sit from the first egg, the eggs hatch out at intervals, with the result that there are eventually both large and small chicks to be found in the nest. In good weather,

PETER BROWN



Bee-eaters hunting insects

all of them get amply fed, and the parents manage to bring up five or six healthy young. However, if food is in short supply, the large, burly chicks get it all, and their small brothers and sisters get none and die. It may sound ruthless, but it means that the parents rear three healthy young rather than six ill-nourished ones, all of whom would probably die in the end. The strategies of evolution are not kind.

NONE of the other uncommon birds that have been drifting, perhaps rather lost, around Britain in the past week or two are quite so startling as the bee-eaters. However, one species has something in common with them: the honey buzzard which, like them, feeds on insects with stings, though in the case of this large raptor the preference is for wasps.

Honey buzzards used to be a fairly common species in our woods — Gilbert White used to see them around Selborne — but now they are rare birds, mostly wandering over to us from the continent.

Another bird that used to be common and is now rare, but has been reported in a number of places in the past few days, is the red-backed shrike. Look

out for a bird with a bright chestnut back, and a black line through its eye, on the top of a gorse bush. You may see it flying down to the ground to trap a beetle, or even find a "larder" of beetles that it has stuck on some thorns.

A very pretty bird that I used to see in Egypt and that has been turning up on the east side of England this week is the bluethroat. It really does have a bright blue throat, with either a red or a white spot in the middle of it. It flits about much like a robin and is most likely to be seen among bushes in waterlogged fields or marshes.

Red-throated pipits, which nest in northern Scandinavia, have also been seen on the east coast: they are like a meadow pipit, with a ruddy throat and chest.

None of them can compare in beauty with the bee-eaters. In fact, I sometimes dream at night of that wonderful cloud of blue birds. They are ideal candidates for dreams.


DERWENT MAY

What's about: Birders — look out for young robins around lawns and flowerbeds. Twitchees — bee-eaters at Fulford, Oxfordshire; common yellowthroat at Baltasound, Shetland; calandra lark at Castletown, Isle of Man. Details from Birdline 0800 700222. Calls cost 40p a minute cheap rate, 50p at all other times.

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THE TIMES

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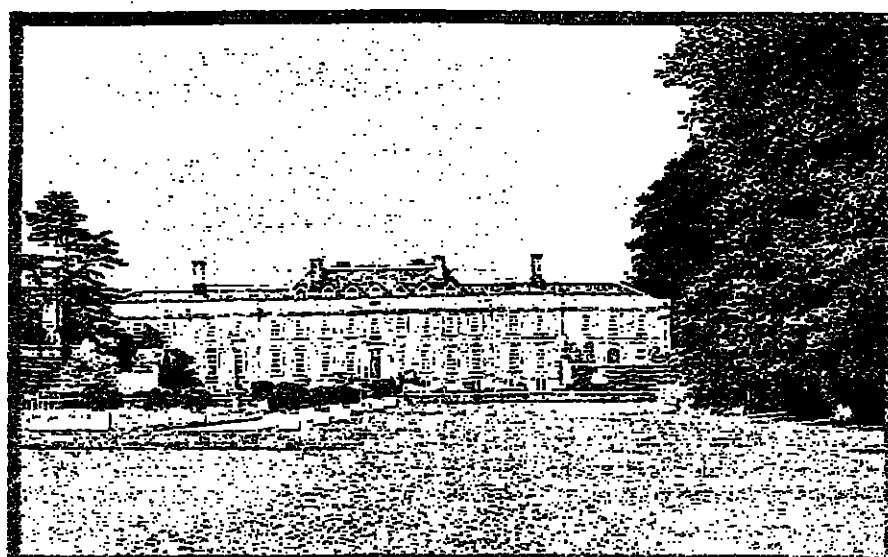
HOW TO APPLY

Send eight of 31 National Trust events with addresses where you should send your token and application form for your free ticket. Where you are required to apply to a regional office, a booking key code AA, BB, CC or DD is given. Event entry times appear in the programme. You can buy additional tickets when you send in your free ticket. The price of children's tickets varies so you are advised to call the inquiry number 0181 345 1111 on weekdays between 9am-5.30pm. Allow a minimum of 10 days to receive your ticket. One application form and four different tokens per ticket are required. No other types of tokens are permitted. This offer is subject to availability and is not valid in conjunction with any other offer.

Children are aged up to 16 for a list of other National Trust events, write to: The National Trust, PO Box 50, Bromley Kent BR1 3XL, including a 20p stamp.



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GLoucestershire
July 24 A Midsummer Night's Dream, Calve Abbey, Ticknall DE73 1LE. 7pm/7.30pm. £7, from above address. Cheques payable to National Trust (Enterprises) Ltd.
Aug 15 Richard III, Aug 16 The Tempest, Hardwick Hall, Doe Lea, Chesterfield. 7pm/7.30pm. £8.50 adult, £4 child. CC.
DORSET
July 18 Bournemouth Sinfonietta Orchestra with fireworks, Kingston Lacy, Wimborne Minster. 5pm/8pm. £12. DD.
MIDDLESEX
Aug 9 Glenn Miller Band Concert, Osterley Park, Isleworth. 5.30pm/7.30pm. £12.50. AA quote ref A33.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Aug 2 Open Air Concert, Clumber Park. 4pm/7pm. £14. CC.
SHROPSHIRE
July 3 The Tempest Aug 9 Richard III, Dudmaston, Quatt, nr Bridgnorth WV15 6ON. 7pm/7.30pm. £7, from above address. Cheques payable to National Trust (Enterprises) Ltd. Enclose a sec.
STAFFORDSHIRE
Aug 30 Last Night of the Proms with fireworks, Shugborough, Milford, nr Stafford. 5pm/7.30pm. £16. BB.
SUFFOLK
July 17 Vivaldi and Bach by candlelight; July 18 Last Night of the Proms by candlelight; both at Ickworth, Homing, Bury St Edmunds. 6pm/8pm. Thurs, July 17, £15; Fri, July 18, £16. BB.
WILTSHIRE
July 4 Jazz in the Park July 5 Fifties, Sixties and Seventies, Dyrham Park, nr Chippenham. Noon/7pm. £10. DD.
July 24, 25, 26 Fête Champêtre - Stourhead Goes Wild in the West with fireworks, Stourhead Landscape Garden, Stourton, Warminster. 5.30pm/7.30pm. July 24, £14; July 25, £16; July 26, £18. DD. Aug 9 Twelfth Night, Stourhead, Stourton, Warminster. 6pm/7.30pm. £8. DD.
Aug 23 Peter Pan, Lacock Abbey, Chippenham. 6pm/7pm. £8. DD.
YORKSHIRE
July 24, 25, 26 The Rivals by Sheridan, Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal, Ripon HG4 3DY. 6.30pm/8pm. £8 from the

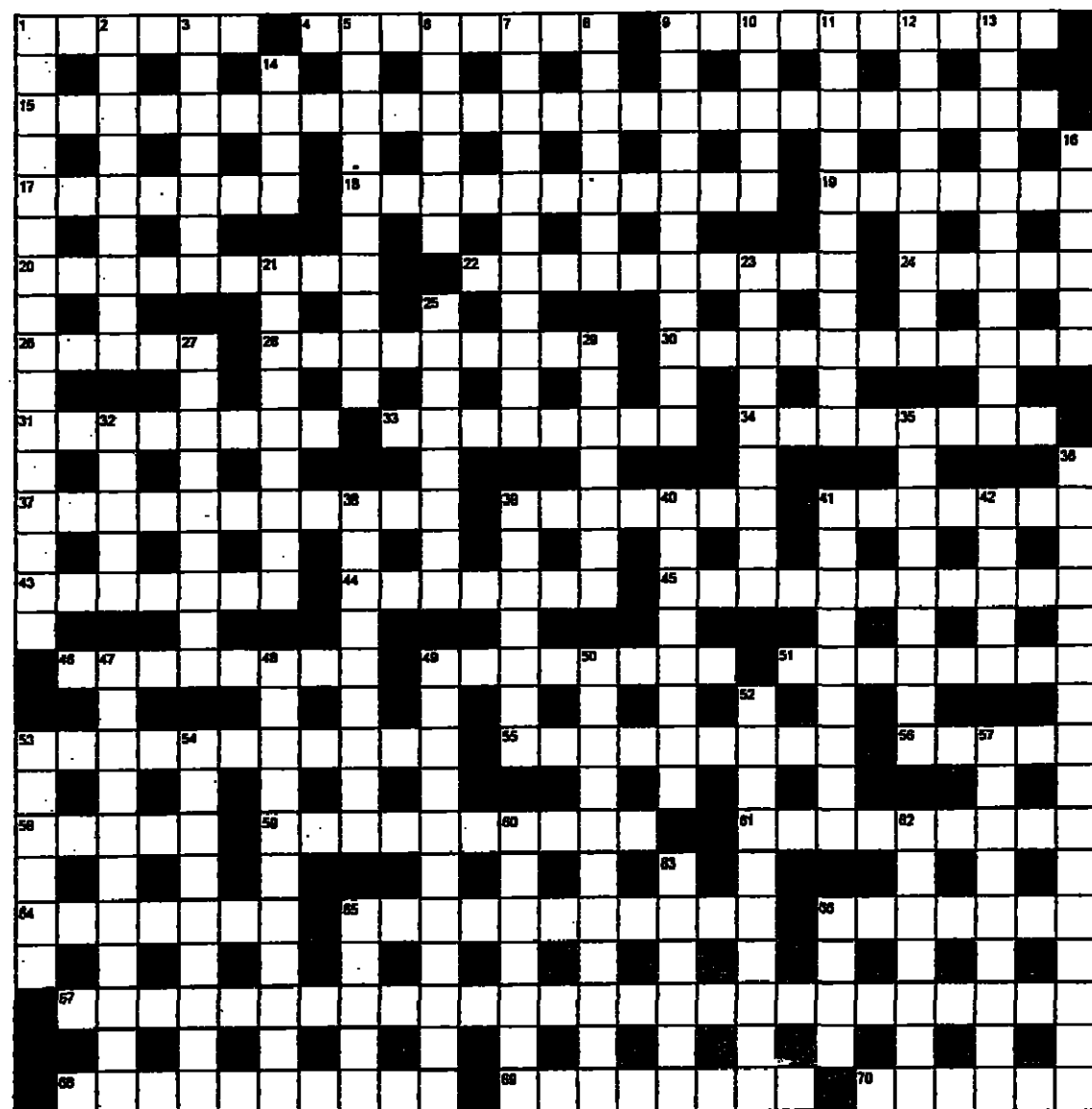
National Trust Regional Box Office at the above address. Cheques payable to National Trust (Enterprises) Ltd.
WALES
July 10 Vivaldi and Bach by candlelight, Erddig, nr Wrexham. 5pm/8pm. £15. BB.
July 11 Operatic, Fabulous Fats with lasers July 26 Open-air opera *Madam Butterfly* by candlelight; Erddig, nr Wrexham. LL13 0YT. 6pm/7pm. £15, from above address. Cheques payable to National Trust (Enterprises) Ltd.
July 19 Open-air opera, *Die Fledermaus* by candlelight. 5.30pm/7.30pm; Aug 23 Open-air Jazz with Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen 5pm/7pm; Plas Newydd, Llanfairpwll, Anglesey LL61 8DO. £10 adult, £5 child, for both events from above address. Cheques payable to National Trust (Enterprises) Ltd.
Aug 1 Royal Fireworks Music with fireworks, Powis Castle, Welshpool, Powys. 6pm/8pm. £16. BB.
BOOKING KEY. AA National Trust Regional Box Office, PO Box 180, High Wycombe, Bucks HP14 4XT. Cheques payable to National Trust (Enterprises) Ltd. BB Performing Arts Management Ltd, Clarence Mill, Bollington, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 5JZ. Cheques payable to Performing Arts Management Ltd, CC Concert Ticket Office, The National Trust, Clumber Park Stableyard, Worksop, Notts S80 3BE. Cheques payable to National Trust (Enterprises) Ltd. DD The Events Box Office, PO Box 925, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9YS. Cheques payable to National Trust (Enterprises) Ltd.

CHANGING TIMES

The Times spring jumbo crossword

TEST YOUR WORD POWER IN OUR CROSSWORD COMPETITION

Prizes of £100 will be given for the first six correct solutions opened on Monday, June 9, 1997. Entries should be sent to: Spring Jumbo Crossword, *The Times*, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. The names of the winners and the solution will be published in Weekend on Saturday, June 14



NAME
ADDRESS
POSTCODE

Spring Times Two Holiday Crossword

There are no prizes for this crossword. The answers will be published on Monday

- | | |
|---|--|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Ready-tied (bow-tie) (4-2) | 1 Royal Hospital redcoat (7,9) |
| 4 Praise: high honour (8) | 2 Unstylish (4) |
| 9 Nourishment (11) | 3 Orig. Games site: London hall (7) |
| 15 No situation is all bad (5,3,1,6,6) | 5 Plucky (10) |
| 17 Spire (7) | 6 Leather (from cattle) (8) |
| 18 Senior officers' assistants (5-2-4) | 7 Murder (prominent person) (11) |
| 19 Messenger; tourist guide (7) | 8 London Cockney area (4,3) |
| 20 Rock fall (9) | 9 Showing aplomb (4-7) |
| 22 Indian lingua franca (10) | 10 Take a nap (5) |
| 24 Youngster (5) | 11 Selection of best from various sources (11) |
| 26 Additional (5) | 12 Makes public (4) |
| 28 Exterior-wall plaster (9) | 13 Dependent (11) |
| 30 Revival (esp. of culture) (11) | 14 Indication (4) |
| 31 Devil worshipper (8) | 16 Cot: hold tenderly (6) |
| 33 Agreed to; put up with (8) | 21 It comes but once a year (9) |
| 34 Motionless (8) | 23 Recipient of yearly fixed amount (8) |
| 37 Take places for race! (2,4,5) | 25 Stocky; densely planted (8) |
| 39 State to N of Wyoming (7) | 27 Until sick of it (2,7) |
| 41 Ambiguous (oracle, reply) (7) | 29 Colossal (7) |
| 43 Intermittent (7) | 32 Trifled (5) |
| 44 Of plants (7) | 35 Three-ball game (9) |
| 46 Hard cheese (8) | 36 Those Frenchies sought him everywhere (Orzly) (7,9) |
| 49 Streetlight pillar (4-4) | 38 Nons. outlaw hero (5,4) |
| 51 T E -; D H - (8) | 39 Smallest value (7) |
| 53 Wind-blown fluff (11) | 40 Forebear (8) |
| 55 Rule badly (9) | 41 Musketeer hero (Dumas) (9) |
| 56 Initialise; assemble (3,2) | 42 Fire-extinguishing compound (5) |
| 58 Similar (5) | 47 One brought without checking (1,3,2,1,4) |
| 59 Uninspired; walker (10) | 48 Overnight carriage (8,3) |
| 61 Seamless whole (9) | 49 Unable to focus close (4-7) |
| 64 Subdue; discipline (7) | 50 Money for mailing (6,5) |
| 65 Prominent; publicised (4-7) | 52 Indian Ocean islands, ex-British (10) |
| 66 Seize possession of (7) | 53 Roof reeds (6) |
| 67 Hamlet: courtiers: they're dead (Stoppard) (11,3,12) | 54 Therapy (9) |
| 68 Stationery with printed address (10) | 57 Obstreperous (9) |
| 69 Bounty (8) | 62 Deadlock (7) |
| 70 Of the mind (6) | 63 Shape; calculate (6) |
| | 65 Pull hard; throw (5) |
| | 66 Staff of ship (4) |

CRCS

- Poess has a page in posth compilation (9)
1 Irrazzy to make shards (8)
2 Computer specialist supporting selective school in speech (10)
3 Like bit that's just been released on the highest authority (8,4,3,6,5)
4 Enish charged around America, difficult to pin down (7)
5 British soldiers in action destroying Hitler in den (4,3,4)
6 Enthusiastic about poetry (7)
7 Sweet drinks' been warmed? One thwaps up! (9)
8 Soeing a portion of spice (10)
9 Tik maiden, like a fancy woman outwarily? (5)
10 Ultimate character in some vintage movie recalled (5)
11 Ding-room extractor (9)
12 Fin decree settled region across the channel (3-2-6)
13 Get fit (8)
14 Car number belonging to me - one put for small amount of cash (3,5)
15 Cru girl given reprimand on leav (8)
16 Chon for team, suitable soccer play (6,5)
17 Unpassant smell drifting along in forest city (7)
18 Plowed land has baked clay either side: gap (7)
19 Imp with heart of rogue disturbed Nien (7)
20 Enj baking too much and become too (7)
21 Fawred, say, one bloke with brai (11)
22 Once-reiving such praise may be toud (8)
23 Ultrconservative opponents of chase - very blue (4-4)
24 Theure motor - new line (8)
25 Sell from the public domain, one add tax in valuing (11)
26 Dislute young socialite taking gloriout before he died (9)
27 Negotiations on arms reduction get way (5)
28 Copheld in wire protector (5)
29 Noto be appeased, bites a nail unctrlably (10)
30 Oxi has not done much to damage heart (4,5)
31 Maon horse is saintly archbishop (7)
32 Elertical discharge? I feel storm's breeze (2,5,4)
33 Pair ship's officer used to secure oneraft (7)
34 Mar the post look attractive and supried a particular candidate unevicallly? (6,4,7,2,3,4)
35 Forch awkward person one must haveng instruments (10)
36 Orwill never forget the plane breing up (5)
37 Heic Paul always coming into Scerrue lessons? (6)

DOWN

- 1 One puts people in touch with another bank after getting hung up (10,6)
2 Like a pig gobbling up rodent (9)
3 Acknowledging it's hard being unwell (7)
4 Female not quiet in general estimation? That brings denial (10)
5 One may be tough, but liable to crumble (6)
6 Condescending sort of government that may be seen in parliaments (11)
7 Bit of machinery had manoeuvred into large plant (7)
8 Nudge one girl having sex appeal - yen for being dissolute (11)
9 Cricketing opponent is so ascendant over England's opener (5)
10 Recycled money, including grant - brilliant! (11)
11 Sail a month before getting angle of mast right (9)
12 Tempting things sent out to ensnare one Band (11)
13 Pronounce order to leave old woman's inadequate accommodation (4)
14 Bishop, flexible and light-hearted (6)
15 Twofold advice to batsman in sort of accident (3-3-3)
16 I catch composer inside, getting drunk (9)
17 Murderer's name associated with crime novels (8)
18 Mammal traps mother in nasty old lair (9)
19 Knight without a place by the fire is somebody having limited jurisdiction (7)
20 Class actors as received by audience (5)
21 Lounge is entered by dad offering sweets (9)
22 Insect hated flying - observe another insect let loose (5-5, 6)
23 Ogre cries out for food (9)
24 Clouded, second-rate ale sadly getting left (7)
25 Having swelling on neck or gout is terrible (8)
26 Tough assignment from brothers we look up to? (4,5)
27 A male always gets a title in the Middle East (5)
28 Interior designer puts small piece of light hue around object (11)
29 Ado if casino harassed punters (11)
30 O, hang the sir naughtily responsible for this crime! (4,7)
31 Roughly assembles sound bit of paving (11)
32 Athletic team that's introduced art of the French dance (10)
33 Remuneration to keep staff - a travesty (6)
34 A job left one cold - nothing in it in the Christian tradition (9)
35 Asteroid coming in quickly? NASA's technology offers the answer (9)
36 A jolly awkward situation - member may go through it (7)
37 Immoderate section of text remembered (7)
38 Bomber held up as contemptible fellow in address (6)
39 Transgression very good? That wasn't the message here! (5)
40 Child's strength given in report (4)

The exercise class was attended by super-svelte and super-neurotic actresses and models, and I was the only fatty in the back row

Living off the fats of the land

LIFE AND SOUL



GINNY DOUGARY

If it wasn't for women like me, an awful lot of people would be considerably less well-off. Every new fitness kick, and dining fad that comes along fills me with new hope and a touching belief that maybe this time I'll be lucky... no more heartburn for me.

I did display fairly worrying signs of being susceptible to this racket before the children came along. In my twenties, there was the odd aerobic class and something called the E-Plan diet which involved consuming heroic quantities of bran in order to propel those extra pounds down the loo. And if I rummaged even further back into my slithering archives, there was an ill-advised egg and wine diet at university and the citrus-fruit-fast at school which enabled me to buy a pair of size 10 — burrrrr! — split-knee magenta and black loons.

But it was only with the arrival of our first son that I became a health Moonie: a fully paid-up, fully brainwashed member of various slimming sects. Further evidence, I would say, that your brain cells get flushed out with your placenta when you give birth. I still remember, all too vividly, the woman who ran one of

the Sydney chapters of Weight Watchers: an incredible Dame Edna figure whose tip of the week was an alternative salad dressing which involved combining a teaspoon of garlic powder (never use anything fresh when dried will do), several teaspoons of malt vinegar, several more of cod liver oil and a dash of Bovril for added "taste".

In my early thirties, battling with my post-natal budge back in London, I had a wretched time with a mother-and-daughter team of body transformers in South Kensington. This class was attended by super-svelte, super-neurotic actresses and models, and I was the only fatty in the back row. The bar work in front of a full-length mirror which covered every wall, to prevent you escaping from your sweaty reflection was bad enough, but the pep talks were quite horrible. We would sit cross-legged and panting on the floor, to be rewarded for our physical exertions with a mental

battering masquerading as motivational chit-chat, warning us about the dire consequences which would await us if we did not abjure caffeine, tannin and fat but how it was okay to smoke — heck, we're suddenly all human — because they did. (If any proof were needed that I am not First Lady material, it is that Cherie Blair has been whittled into shape by the Goneril-like daughter of this ghastly regime.)

And now that mid-life crisis is all the rage as we baby-boomers — the biggest, richest and, it must be said, most self-obsessed generation there has ever been — have hit 40, there is no stopping me.

(Spurred by the fear that I was heading for Evans-Outsize-dom, I managed to shift a stone or two before I became pregnant for the second time.) But in the six years since our second son was born, I have submitted myself to every cranky regime available with little — or, rather, too much — to show for it. After the temporary success — which, when you think about it, is a contradiction in terms — with the Clapham branch of Weight Watch-while-you-put-it-all-back-on-Ers, I turned to the yucky, loony and now defunct American Multi-system (more pep talks and a hulking weekly supply of frozen granu-

lated food, packed with every additive imaginable). I still keep a carton of "Country Noodles" boasting "imitation bacon bits, onions, peas and peppers" on my bookcase to remind me of my foolish ways. This was my favourite dish and contained no fewer than 11 E-numbers.

I tried Oprah Winfrey's low-fat cookbook, but if life is too short to stuff a mushroom, there are certainly not enough hours in the day to shred potatoes into filigree threads which are then tossed in egg whites with a smidgen of paprika and baked. This "on no account call it a..." diet, coincided with my year with a personal trainer. When I point out to poor Simon, whom I still see, that I am not exactly his best advertisement, he is reduced to saying, "Well, just think what you'd be like if I hadn't come along."

Last year's flirtation was with colonic irrigation which my less kind friends have said must have been a weight off

my mind. Actually, Leor Cohen's clinic worked wonders for me but, again, they were short-lived. It did not help that while he was fiddling around with tubes down below, I was gazing at a cartoon depicting a plump matronly woman, togged out in a track suit, jogging. This made me feel that I was getting it — so to speak — at both ends.

While I work out how to become a polar explorer — can you think of a better incentive to lose weight and get fit than the very real threat that you might be endangering your life if you don't? I have agreed to go to Champney's health farm with my mother for a rather bizarre variation on R&R. This is a prelude to my latest stab at the body beautiful or, considering the time of my life — the body young. I have agreed to let Judith Wills — who has a book to promote — take ten years off my life in just ten weeks. (This miracle she intends to achieve through more personal training, diet plan, psychology and restyling.) If she is successful, you will doubtless hear a lot more about it. If not — well, let's put it this way — I will be the last person to be surprised.



Alan and Pamela Biggar with their adopted son Christopher, 13. Alan discovered he was adopted when he was 23 but Christopher has always known

Son, I'm not your father

When do you tell children they are adopted? The 'bolt from the blue' approach is outdated, says Ann Treneman

When Alan Biggar was 23 and still living at home in north London, his father died. "He was a sales rep. He went to work one morning and at half-past eight there was a policeman at the door saying he had been killed in a road accident," Alan says. "He had a heart attack and died in the car."

It was a shock, but more so for Alan than anyone else in the family. For the death alone had been kept for 23 years. His parents had agreed that if one of them died, Alan should be told the truth and so the next day his mother sat across from him at the breakfast table and tried to do just that.

"She said she had something very important to tell me and she was obviously struggling to say it," Alan says. "She said she had to tell me that my father was not really my father. I immediately thought the worst. Once she got over that, she just said: 'We adopted you when you were six months old.'"

That was almost 30 years

ago, but Alan tells his story with great attention to detail around the breakfast table at his Northampton home. His 13-year-old son Chris is listening. "I'd be mad if that happened to me," he says, looking at his father. "I'd hit the ceiling."

It never will happen to Chris, though, because both he and his sister have always known they were adopted. There are no secrets or shame about the subject in this family now. "Even when Chris was a baby, before he could talk, the word adopted was being said to him," Alan says.

Alan and his wife Pamela decided to be totally open about adoption, partly because of Alan's experience, but also because that is now expected of adoptive parents. "The child should know from the beginning," says Donal Giltinan, the Scottish director for the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering. "It's

not a matter of sitting them down at a certain age and telling them. It should be part of their upbringing. For as long as the child can remember, he will know that his parents chose him."

The world of adoption has been transformed since Alan received his double blow in 1968. The open approach means that the experience of someone like the MP Clare Short, who was reunited with her son, will become rarer. Now the birth mother may even visit the child occasionally, or communicate via a third-party "letterbox" system.

Confidentiality remains an issue for most, however, and that can make publicity difficult. This is the case with Alan and Pamela's daughter, though not with Chris, who is from South Africa.

One reason for this brave new world is practical: most children adopted in Britain are between the ages of five and ten. "For them, adoption is a completely different landscape. It's not about making a fresh start anymore, it's about allowing a child a sense of continuity and to keep them in touch with their past. This is something that is important to all of us," says Leigh Chambers, a BAAF spokeswoman.

Alan feels no bitterness towards his parents for keeping his secret for so long, but he shudders to think what might have happened if he had found out accidentally during his own rebellious teenage years. "Would I have suddenly flipped and been a total rebel and started going criminal? I don't know. Some people are affected in that way. Or they have gone the opposite way and become recluses. They don't lead normal lives."

Certainly many youngsters find out the hard way that they are adopted. Carolyn Carter, an intermediary who helps people search for their birth families, says: "Some people's stories are dreadful. They find out when the neighbours shout it out in the middle of a row or find a bit of paper at the bottom of a drawer." Carolyn was told she was adopted when she was very young, but the subject was not discussed.

In contrast, Chris Biggar has not one but two "life story" books that contain photographs, cards and other mementoes. His book has a calendar showing the day he came to live with Pamela and Alan and the "adoption announcement" they sent out to friends and family to announce the arrival of a bouncing three-day-old boy.

Chris does not hide his interest in his birth mother and over the years has had many questions on the subject. Such curiosity is seen by his parents as natural and a fact of their lives. Being open about adoption is not a matter of having one or two heart-to-heart talks: it is an ongoing process. "It develops as a child gets older," says Alan, now 52. "They may say nothing about it for months, and then you get a week of questions."

Honesty has its risks, however. Some truths are harder than others, and information must be handled with particular care in cases where, say, a child is a product of rape. In other ways it can be the parents who feel threatened. "There used to be a fear that once a child knew they were adopted they might reject their adoptive parents and search out their birth parents. This may be irrational, but there is still an element of it

today," Mr Giltinan says. "A lot of people who search for their birth parents wait until their parents die, because they feel it would be disloyal to do it earlier. That is the message they pick up and they have not been reassured otherwise."

This certainly is not something that Chris feels and it is accepted that, at age 18, he will seek out his birth mother. "We all just live with knowing that," Pamela says. "There is not going to be anything traumatic about it. Christopher has already told us. 'It's not because I don't love you or want you to be my parents. I just want to know what she looks like.' It will help to complete his picture of what has been going on."

Alan's picture may never be complete. He knows a little bit about his birth parents — his birth father was Scottish, for instance, and that he was the product of a wartime affair — but he has never searched for them. "It's something that Chris cannot understand: he is curious and finds it odd that his father is not."

"By the time I found out I thought, well, it really doesn't make any difference. Knowing earlier would have made me more inquisitive to find my blood parents. But I spent so long not knowing that it didn't matter any more."

Suddenly Alan sounds brisk. "Obviously it is possible that somewhere around the country I've got a half brother and sister." It's the kind of thing that his son will not have to wonder about.



The official celebration a few months after Chris's adoption

Lessons in life

Ruth Gledhill attends a remarkable morning service at Rugby school devised and conducted by its pupils



DOUG MARKE

SEATED IN a front pew in the overpoweringly-ornate chapel at Rugby school was like being at the wrong end of a kaleidoscope. Apart from a bomb alert and roadworks, I had only myself to blame for being late for the 8.30am morning service, so late that everyone had already left for their morning classes.

I covered, expecting a thorough ticking off, but instead the chaplain, the Rev Keith Jones, beamed forgiveness. Pupils from the school's Christian fellowship had put on that morning's service and, by coincidence, all but one were on study breaks. Within five minutes, they were back and I was the privileged, sole recipient of morning worship, take two.

Pupils in Rugby's art department, headed by Ian Burke, have been commissioned by the publishers Cassell to illustrate *The Times Book of Prayers*, a collection of more than 300 prayers written by *Times* readers, and I was there to collect their drawings.

Besides having an impressive academic record, Rugby also emphasises the importance of developing the spiritual side of life. The £4,430-a-term school, founded in 1657, is still famed for its great reforming 19th-century head master, Dr Tom Arnold, a celebrated preacher. Just seconds into the remarkable 15-minute service put on by its teenage pupils, it was easy to see why Rugby's stature remains undiminished.

"As he was hanging on the Cross, Jesus

began to recite psalm 22," Katherine said. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" cried Tom, from the lost recesses of the altar. Stew read the rest of the psalm, up to: "They share out my clothing among them and cast lots for my shirt."

Katherine, who at 17 had been through a lifetime's worth of suffering in the space of nine weeks, began to speak. "It started with a culmination of things. The death of a close friend, the rejection of someone I cared about, a relationship and communication breakdown in my family, as well as acute medical problems, and work." She was left shattered, she said, holding life's strings tightly.

Helena read from Matthew's gospel, describing Jesus's plea to have the cup that was to come removed from him. "Yet not my will, but yours, be done," she said.

Katherine continued. In hospital she had learnt two things. "The first was that you can let go of the fragments of yourself and start again. The second was that you can't make assumptions about your life." The burden was lifted when her music teacher at home told her: "Look to your music. It is good. God is there. God is with you." She discovered her friends had not deserted her, that she could survive and enjoy life.

After prayers, we departed for coffee and tea at the chaplain's house, before the pupils left to continue their lessons. I was alone once again but, strangely, no longer felt it.

● Rugby school, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 2EH (01788 543465).



The Rev Keith Jones at Rugby school

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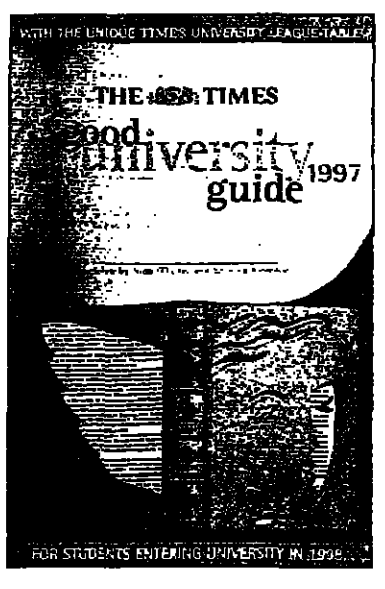
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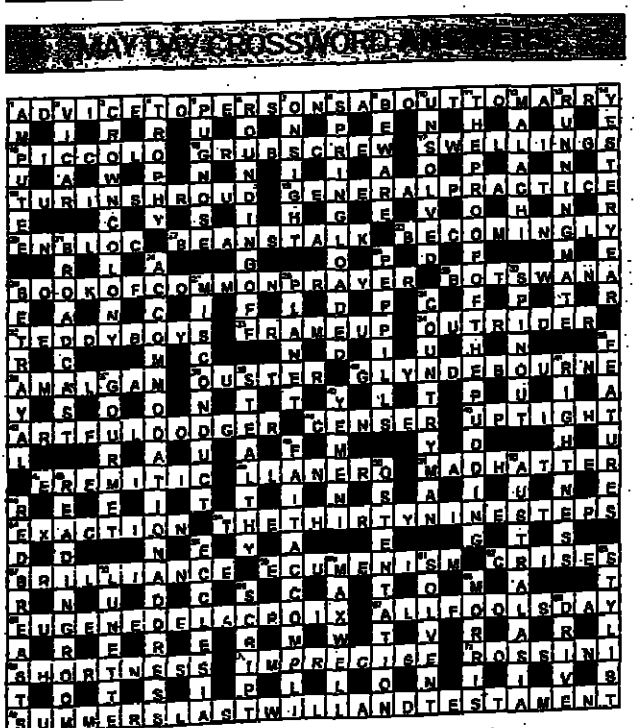
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The six winners of the May Day jumbo crossword, published in Weekend on May 3, who will each receive £100, are: J. Green of London SW1; N. Miller of Cranfield, Bedfordshire; J. Morgan of Caernarvon; A. Mylward of Derby; E. Price of West Bromwich; and P. Robinson of Bristol.



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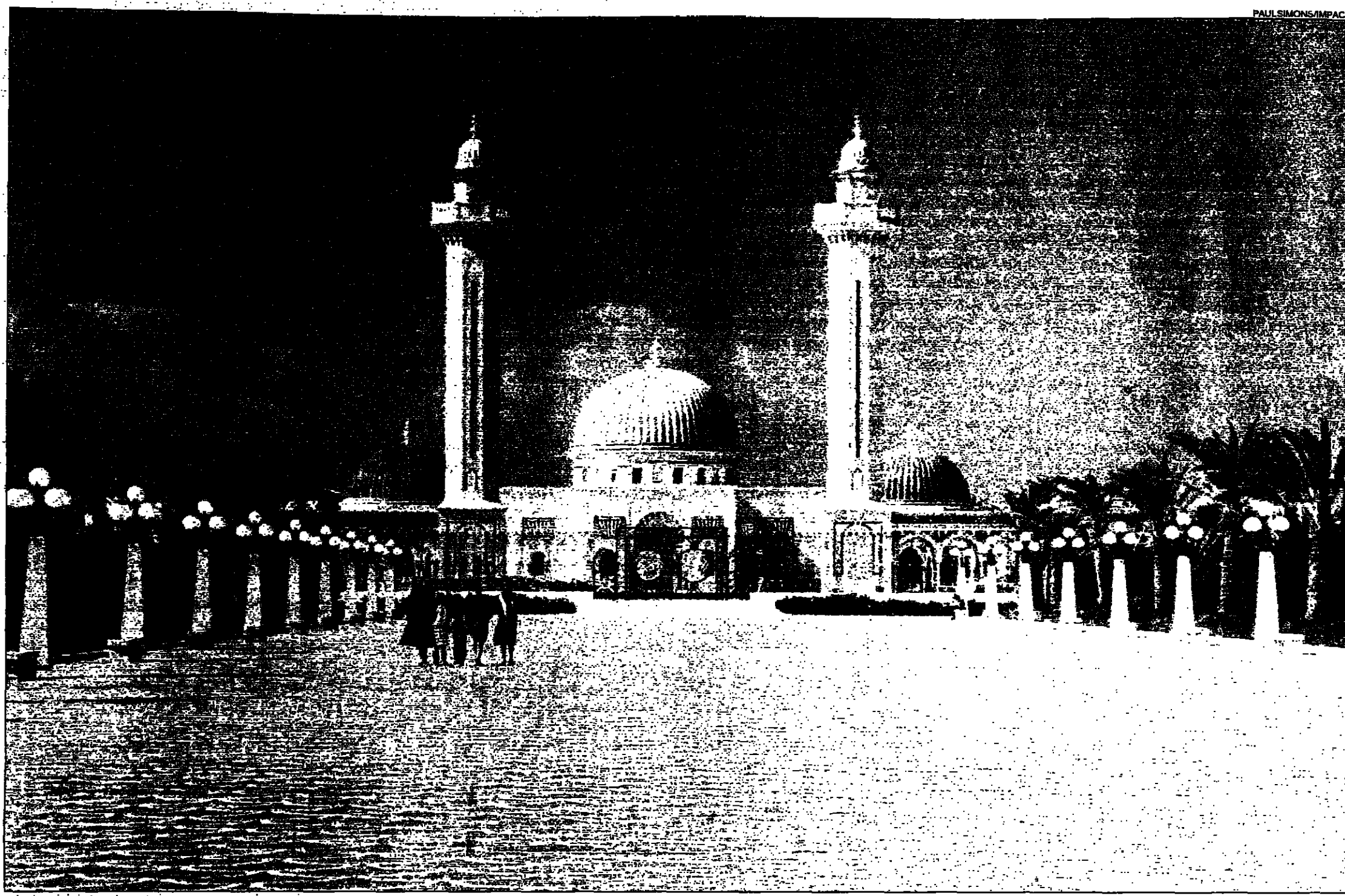
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their team
overseas

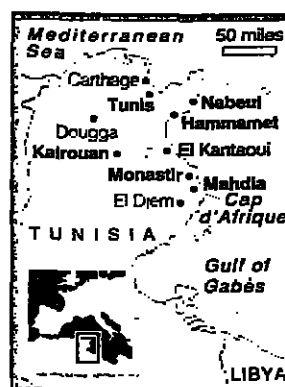
sports tours • 18



Take your partners for a tourist two-step



The imposing Bourguiba Mosque belies the true Monastir: once a quiet fishing village, it is now a haven for the sun-sea-and-sand tourists who take the Noddy train ride from their hotels into the oddly sterile city centre



FACT FILE

- Tunis Air (0171-734 7644) flies Heathrow/Tunis four times a week; GB Airways (0345 222111) flies from Gatwick three times a week. Both from £192 return.
- Hotel prices vary with the time of year. B&B for two at the Royal Azur in Hammamet (00 216 2278 500) costs £30-£100 a night. Hotel Hasdrubal, Port El Kantaoui (00 216 3241 944), £40-£80.
- Tour operators offering holidays to Tunisia include Panorama Holidays (01273 206531); Wignmore Holidays (0171-486 4425); Cadogan (01703 332661).
- Restaurant meals are good value, £6-£20.
- The Tunisian dinar (about 70p), is not available outside the country. Sterling travellers cheques and credit cards are accepted.
- Best times to visit are May to mid-July and September to October. Temperatures in August reach 90F.
- Tunisian National Tourist Office, 77a Wigmore Street, London W1H 9LJ (0171-224 5561).
- Reading: The Travel Bookshop (0171-228 5260) recommends *Rome in Africa*, by Susan Raven (Routledge, £16.99); *Salammbô*, by Gustav Flaubert (Penguin, £6.99); *Tunisia*, (Rough Guide, £10.99).

That was it, then. Hammamet. The last restaurant, the last hotel, the last tourists with their sun-blocked faces and their low-slung shoulder bags. The coast road stretches ahead and I settle back in the bus.

Tunisia is playing Namibia in the African football league and the commentary blasts over the radio. The driver hunches over the wheel, eyes on the road, ears on the commentary. Every free kick brings an excited burst of speed. Every off-side puts the foot harder on the accelerator. I dread a goal.

We pass the Fabland amusement park and the open-air markets where Dralon three-piece suits are dotted round the dusty fields. We pass women in veils heaving home white plastic garden furniture. We pass butchers' shops with sheep's and cows' heads hung outside (to show the meat is fresh).

After a couple of miles, we hit a building site. A half-built hotel. Then another, two more, another. Is this right? Forty hotels being built simultaneously along the shoreline? Mile after straggling mile of en-suite bathrooms and buffet breakfasts and refillable mini-bars?

It is New Hammamet South, an astonishing wave of confidence in Tunisia. Hammamet, the oldest and most characteristic of the country's Mediterranean resorts, already has 42,000 beds. New Hammamet South will add 30,000.

The hotels — none, by decree, higher than the tallest palm — will cater partly for the four million tourists lured here each year by cheap packages.

But the trend is subtly upmarket. Special-interest holidays include bridge, painting, golf — and, with a flash of silver shoes and sparkling sequins, sequence dancing. Take your partners, please, for the Tunisian tourist two-step.

"Our Scandinavian market has increased by 48 per cent over the past year," points out. Lotfi Bourguiba from the Government tourism office. "They like to play golf and it is one of our new products." Really? Scandinavians? "Norway, Sweden, Denmark," explains M. Bourguiba, helpfully.

Bourguiba is the most famous name in Tunisia. Habib Bourguiba — Lotfi's great uncle — was the architect of his country's independence from France. He ruled from 1956 until his overthrow in 1987. Ruled absolutely. In the 1980s, television programmes were frequently interrupted by two-minute bursts from his key speeches. At 2pm, it might be a speech from 1974. At 3.30pm, a speech from 1959. Sometimes he appeared as an old man; and sometimes as a very old man.

Despite independence, the French influence lingers. Tunis is a poor man's Paris with palm trees. French is the second language. And in the souks, many tourists' first brush with The Exotic East, the atmosphere is laid-back in an agreeably French way.

**"You like Tunisia?
Very nice. To you,
very cheap. Old sites.
Lots of new hotels."
Stephen McClarence
takes up the offer**

tourist-luring. You would like this leather dog basket? Or this expandable pouffe? Or this antique couscous bowl? Very old. Have a shufti, sir. How much for this donkey saddle? Good price. Very good price. Which country? Allemagne? Francaise? "Norway," I say, remembering the Scandinavian gollers. "Ah," says the trader. "Beautiful fords."

An English couple waddle towards him. Both are wearing tight shorts. He carries a 4ft-long stuffed toy camel under his arm; she makes do with a handbag. They eye a display of ashtrays. The trader is straight in: "How much? High price for Germans. But not for English. English are skint. Live and let live."

Back at the Hammamet hotel, the sun is setting. Pink mares' tails trail across a purple sky. Swallows dart; bats flit; boats bob. The Hockney-blue swimming pool is empty; the loungers are deserted; ghostly Pan pipe music — the hotel soundtrack — plays from a small loudspeaker in the geraniums. But no one hears it.

Most of the guests, with their salmon-pink bathrobes and lobster-pink faces, are back in their rooms, resting after a day of relaxing.

Out on the beach, beyond the plantations of sun shades, sun-seekers have left their flip-flop prints behind them in the sand. The only sounds are the waves and the call of the muezzin, and the hopeful "hello" of two Tunisian men eying up two German women.

Here, at sunset, with a soft wind blowing through the mimosa trees, there is peace and poetry and a hint of the legendary Mediterranean of Virgil and Homer. It is easier to find inland, through a scrubby landscape of olive groves and ploughing donkeys, at some of the world's finest Roman sites.

Carthage, the most potent name, may be little more than a glorified rocky. But at Dougga, the Romans could just have pulled out, leaving their town to the grazing goats. And, further south, El Djem's colossal oval Colosseum is better-preserved than Rome's.

The massive outside walls loom like a fortress across the plain. The inside is less complete — a skeleton structure of arches, arcades, corridors and tunnels. It's like strolling round a whale's rib cage. Without the roar of traffic that blights Rome's Colosseum the mind's ear hears the clamour of 30,000 voices as animals, gladiators and Christians confront each other. It still feels brutal, baking in the midday sun, a place of blood and death.

In shady corners, surreal fragments of statues — a pair of clasped hands, the folds of a toga erected on a plinth — are covered with graffiti. Ahmed, Malek and

Ferid have followed the example of "J.C. Vickrey, Aug '43", and "G. Bisbardi, Controleur Tabacs, 1884", vandalising their way into history.

Up the road is an immaculately kept museum of Roman mosaics. Orpheus strums his lute to charm the vicious animals and a homicidally fierce duck. Centaurs and Nereides disport, the young Dionysus rides a melancholy tiger, a large man pats a small elephant, a naked couple entwined themselves in vines. It's a world of Bacchanalian plenty picked out in stone jigsaws.

The collection is small enough not to overwhelm the visitor — the potential hazard of the vast and wonderful displays at the Bardo National Museum in Tunis with their eccentric line in captions. "Among scrolls of vine-vintage cupids," runs one, "we can see a kennelman and low greyhounds."

Many tourists want none of this. They are happy with their hotel and their beach, with sun and sand and perhaps the occasional Noddy train ride into the oddly sterile centre of Monastir.

Port El Kantouli has been built for them — a pastiche resort of Tunisia. Toytown architecture clustered round a marina. A leisure concept, not a place. Families wander between the Moby Dick disco boat and the Neptune Restaurant, approached through an open shark's jaw framed by cut-outs of shiver-me-timbres prizes.

Maybe, just maybe, the tourists will risk a trip to Kairouan, the holy city dominated by the citadel of its Great Mosque. It offers, at the Tapis Cherif carpet warehouse, one of the best floorshows outside Las Vegas.

Here, the rolled-up carpets are stacked at the end of the showroom like pillars. Lassaad, a chunky young man with an engaging sales pitch, steps forward: "I show you please first the classical carpet, about the size two metre." An assistant seizes a carpet from the stack and hurries it down. It hits the floor with a thud like a distant cannon and unrolls. "Four months is hand-made with two women. Ah, very nice. And very nice price..." He pulls his calculator from his top pocket, darts his forefinger over it and looks up with the triumphant smile of a magician finishing a trick. "£1,700, included transport until your house."

It's only the start. "I show you now flying carpets..." Out they come, thrown on top of each other, a 3ft Princess and the Pea pile. "And this... very new, like baby carpet, my friend."

I do not buy. Not here. Not in Hammamet. Not even in Sidi Bou Said, the instantly pretty village resort outside Tunis whose biblically boxy houses have low domes echoing the curves of their satellite dishes.

The village, a sort of Tunisian Montmartre, is a rhapsody in blue and white. Why, I ask M. Bourguiba from the tourist office, is everything painted this dazzlingly pure blue? "Ah, le bleu," he whispers. "C'est le couleur du ciel et de la mer." It is the colour of the sky and the sea. He smiles at his own poetry.

Tunisia 2, Namibia 1.

A Norwegian Coastal Voyage offers the traveller scenery on an epic scale together with a wonderful feeling of peace and tranquillity. It is difficult to imagine a more relaxing setting than coastal Norway. The immense size of the fjords and the timeless quality of scenes that have changed little in the past centuries create a unique atmosphere that can be particularly enjoyed from the comfort of a coastal vessel.

The new generation ships of the Norwegian Coastal Fleet which ply the coast daily from Bergen to the far north of Norway provide a vital link to the isolated coastal communities. Obviously, this is not a cruise in the accepted sense of the word, but all the more enjoyable for many because of the absence of the usual jollifications. These working vessels have a dual role of providing transportation to local passengers and freight as well as offering cruise places to overseas visitors. This unique service provides the ideal means of seeing Coastal Norway and experiencing Norwegian life in a way that would not be possible on a regular cruise ship.

The Coastal Fleet has a fine tradition for providing excellent wholesome food and a caring and efficient service. The vessels offer all you would expect of a modern, purpose-built ship; the 230 cabins have private facilities and spacious public areas which include a dining room, cafe, lounges, bar, library and shop.

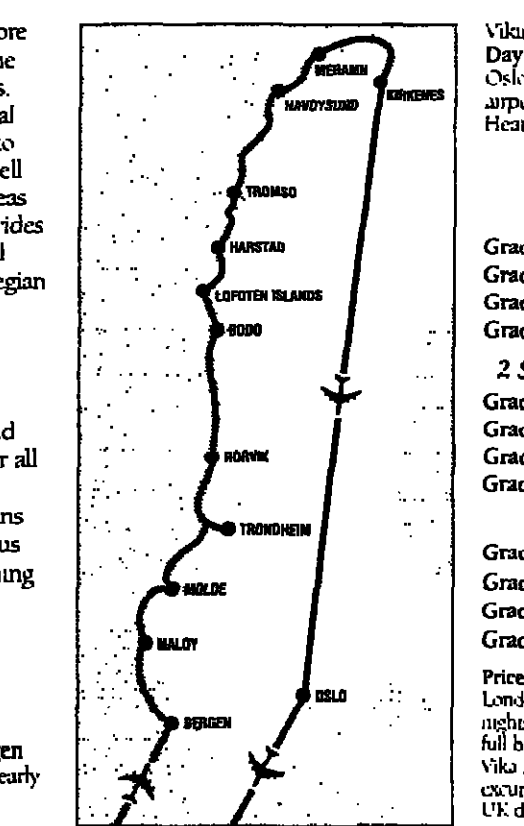
THE ITINERARY

Day 1 London (Heathrow) to Bergen with Scandinavian Airlines, arriving early afternoon. Embark Coastal vessel. Afternoon free to explore Norway's second largest city, strikingly located between the mountains and the sea. Sail in the early evening. Day 2 Maloy to Molde. Morning call to Maloy and continue to Alesund, passing the island of Runde, which is home to over 500,000 seabirds. Explore Alesund, a picturesque port built on three islands and sail to Molde. Here the views are stunning, 78 peaks of the Romsdal dominate the fjord. Day 3 Trondheim to Rovik. Arrive at the first Viking capital of Trondheim, a



NORWEGIAN Coastal Voyage

A NINE DAY VISIT TO OSLO, THE NORWEGIAN FJORDS AND ACROSS THE ARCTIC CIRCLE TO THE NORTH CAPE



delightful city with a distinctly medieval feel to it. See the imposing cathedral and Bishop's palace. Sail out of the Trondheim Fjord past the rich fishing banks for an afternoon at sea. Day 4 Bodo to Lofoten Islands. Cross the Arctic Circle and navigate the many channels, passing some of the enchanting villages. In Bodo there will be the opportunity to take a trip to the top of Mount Ronvik with its magnificent views. In the afternoon sail to the Lofoten Islands, where fairytale villages by the

edge of the sea are backed by towering jagged granite peaks. Day 5 Harstad to Tromso. After a brief call at Harstad we will sail into Tromso, the largest town north of the Arctic Circle. This is a thriving city with two excellent museums and some amazing architecture. Be sure to visit the stunning modern cathedral. Day 6 Hovsund to Mehamn. The highlight of today will be the opportunity to visit the North Cape plateau which rises almost 1000 feet out of the sea.

Day 7 Kirkenes to Oslo. Disembark after breakfast and fly to Oslo. Brief orientation tour of the city. Stay 2 nights at the first class Vikta Amum Hotel (or similar) which is centrally located and ideally placed for exploring Norway's capital.

Day 8 Oslo. This is an ideal city to explore on foot. Be sure to visit the Maritime Museum which includes Amundsen's Polar ship - Gjoa and splendid examples of

Viking ships. Day 9 Oslo to London. Morning free in Oslo. Early afternoon departure for airport for Scandinavian Airlines flight to Heathrow, arriving late afternoon.

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Price includes: Economy class air travel London/Bergen and Kirkenes/Oslo/London. 6 nights aboard a Norwegian Coastal vessel on full board, transfers, 2 nights in Oslo at the Vikta Amum Hotel on breakfast only basis, excursion in Oslo port taxes, airport taxes, UK departure tax, tour manager.

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The 300ft drop into the Lost World at Waitomo was daunting. It mattered little that those taking the plunge by beelining into the abyss were securely trussed, their every move overseen by an experienced guide. The request to wing out and away from the masonry of the launching platform was straightforward enough, its execution far from so. Nervous laughter echoed round the rim of what was once a huge volcano. What were we all doing here?

Perseverely, a group of us were following Scotland's rugby tour to New Zealand last year. Such is the nature and variety of sports tours, a market growing by 10 per cent a year, that exotic, historic, cultural or unusual locations re-built into any itinerary.

The beauty of such expeditions is the variety and flexibility they offer. Itineraries can be tailored to suit budget, inexperience and demand; the most extreme example in recent years being the two friends from Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire who flew to New Zealand for the day in 1993 to watch the decisive third and final test between New Zealand and the

■ **Sport Abroad** (01306 744345) has flights to South Africa for the British Lions tour from £599, including guaranteed match tickets, Cape Town (June 21), Durban (June 28) and Johannesburg (July 5). Escorted tours with rugby celebrities — for example, the two centre-two Test tour to Cape Town and Durban from June 19-29, cost from £1,577.
■ **World of Sport** (01444 417811) has a selection of six packages for the Lions tour to South Africa.

British Lions. Otherwise, one can run with the pack, travel direct or stopover in say, Hong Kong or Fiji, at little or no extra cost.

When the Lions beat New Zealand in 1971 the idea of travelling supporters had barely been conceived. Now, 5,000 people will be in South Africa this summer to follow the Lions, who play their first game today.

Mike Roberts, a former Welsh international who toured New Zealand and who now runs Sport Abroad, says rugby is played in parts of the world which people want to visit anyway. "Which supporter would say no to seeing New Zealand, South Africa or Aus-

tralia and combine it with their favourite sport? People can dip in and out, stay for one week or one month, and it is a way of meeting like-minded individuals, making new friends."

As one of three official operators, Sport Abroad guar-

antees tickets to the three tests internationally in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, which have long been a sell out. Its tours include a group leader, invariably a former international player, such as Gavin Hastings or Willie John McBride, the cost of whose

presence is built into the price. Ian Scott, a director of the company says: "Our first big tour was to the World Cup in New Zealand in 1987 and that side of the business has grown steadily ever since. A lot of people book up again."

Derek Stevenson, employee relations director with Scottish Courage, put money into a building society account each month for two years to pay for his three-week holiday. "Tours offer a unique blend, travelling with the team, seeing it develop and combining it with extensive travel around the country in a way one would never have normally done on a holiday," he says. "There were about 40 of us; we got together for the matches then went our separate ways in between. It was a really good blend and we got more out of it than we expected."

"We wanted to see New Zealand in between the matches and we did. We drove from Blenheim to Dunedin and then Wellington to Auckland and the Bay of Islands. It was the first trip like that I'd been on but I can't recommend it highly enough."

Old and new worlds rub shoulders happily in New Zealand. Parts of it are a wilderness, remote, rugged and beautiful, its quiet towns and villages evocative of Britain in a bygone era. Nothing epitomised that more than a journey in the local post bus, a lifeline to the community

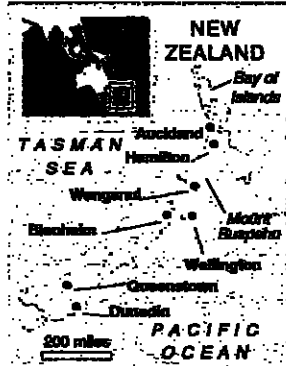
TOURS FOR SPORTS FANS FACT FILE

Flights and match tickets costs from £885, with tours escorted by former Welsh international J.P.R. Williams from £1,449.
■ **Lawrie's Travel** (0131-554 0471) offers flights from London to Johannesburg for one week, including seven days' unlimited car hire, for £650, based on two people travelling.
■ Other sports tour firms

include, Caribbours (0171-581 3517); Caribbean Connection (01244 329556); David Dryer Sports Tours (0171-831 7799); Gullivers (01684 293175).
■ **Air New Zealand** (0181-741 2299) flies Heathrow-Auckland five times a week. Low season (April 16-June 30) fares start from about £690, which includes a stopover in Los Angeles. For an extra £60 you

can include unlimited stopovers in the South Pacific, taking in Tahiti, Fiji, Tonga, Western Samoa and the Cook Islands.

■ **New Zealand Tourist Board** (0171-930 1662).
■ **Reading: The Travel Bookshop** (0171-229 5260) recommends *A People's Game*, by Geoffrey Moorhouse (Hodder, £14.99); *Classic New Zealand Adventures* (Compass Star, £10.99); *New Zealand Travel Survival Kit* (Lonely Planet, £12.99).



strung out along the course of the Wanganui river, into the hinterland where once thriving communities disappeared after the railway took over from the waterway as the main transport artery. Meeting three ruins in the isolated hamlet of Jerusalem, and being welcomed by Maori choirs trying to safeguard their culture in remote areas were humbling experiences.

All this does not mean that the country as a whole has stood still. Auckland is as cosmopolitan and vibrant a city as any in the world, but it is when the curtain is pulled back and the interior exposed that one appreciates the richness of New Zealand.

Most of the delights of the South island are well documented: the peaks of the Southern Alps; skiing at Queenstown; the Franz Josef glacier and helicopter rides over the barren wilderness of the south west corner.

The more populous North Island has different attractions: swimming with dolphins in the Bay of Islands; black-water rafting in the Waitomo Caves; and horse racing around Hamilton give another sporting perspective.

Those who followed Scotland last year enjoyed an unforgettable experience. Where else could one endure a minor earthquake as we did in Wanganui, witness a volcano erupting at breakfast as Mount Ruapehu did in full view of the hotel and see some of the best rugby one could hope for?

MARK SOUSTER

Eye on the ball, suitcase at the ready

As hundreds of British rugby fans enjoy the first match of the Lions tour in Port Elizabeth today, a greater army of supporters are planning their itinerary back home. For despite so many disappointing results, the England cricket team can expect an even larger following than the Lions when they visit the West Indies next winter.

During the last tour, 5,000 English fans poured into the tightly packed stands at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, to inspire their team to a rare victory. And when the two sides meet there again next March, even more English supporters will be watching.

The teams — and the tour operators who have recognised the trend — are benefiting from an increasing desire among holidaymakers to enjoy their favourite sport in an exotic setting. For many it means watching cricket in the Caribbean, football in Italy and motor racing

in Monaco. This winter they will have a greater choice than ever. Caribbean Connection will shortly announce an extensive programme of tours to take in all or one of the Test matches in Jamaica, Trinidad, Antigua and Barbados.

The company is also planning the most upmarket way to follow the team — by cruising the Caribbean in a luxury liner and putting into port in time for the Tests.

Caribbours has signed up the cricketing Cowdrey family — Sir Colin and his two sons Chris and Graham — to lead its tours to Jamaica, Barbados and Antigua and provide expert comments after the day's play. Prices will start from £1,630 for nine nights' accommodation, flights, match tickets and a gala dinner. Specialised companies including Sport Abroad, Gullivers Sports Travel and those bearing the names of former international sportsmen such as Mike Burton, the England rugby player, will also be

offering packages to the West Indies.

The enthusiasm for the cricket tour is likely to be overshadowed, however, by interest in next year's World Cup football finals in France. If England or Scotland succeed in making it to the finals, the rush for tickets will be matched by panic in the holiday companies, which will have relatively little notice of where and when the big games will take place.

In the meantime, firms like David Dryer Sports Tours are urging England on by providing packages for fans to the crucial qualifying game in Poland next Saturday. The company is one of the few which can link tours to almost any leading sporting event whether it is a big fight, the Indianapolis 500 or Superbowl. Dryer is even thinking of arranging trips to tournaments featuring minority sports, including basketball and volleyball.

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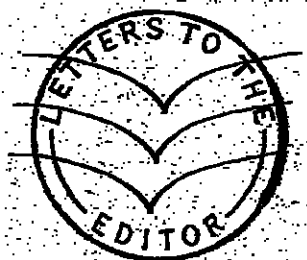
مكتبة الامن الاصل

FOUND THE WORLD: A WEEKEND GUIDE

Perils of deep diving

From George Cameron, Preston: I was horrified by Martin Poplewell's article on diving in Fiji (Weekend, May 17). He writes of diving to 200m, enhanced by nitrogen narcosis. Diving's regulatory bodies do not agree on the maximum depth for recreational diving but they would not recommend 200m as safe. Nitrogen narcosis can never be recommended. Along with the excessive depth, it is like saying that being drunk enhances driving around the M25 at 150mph.

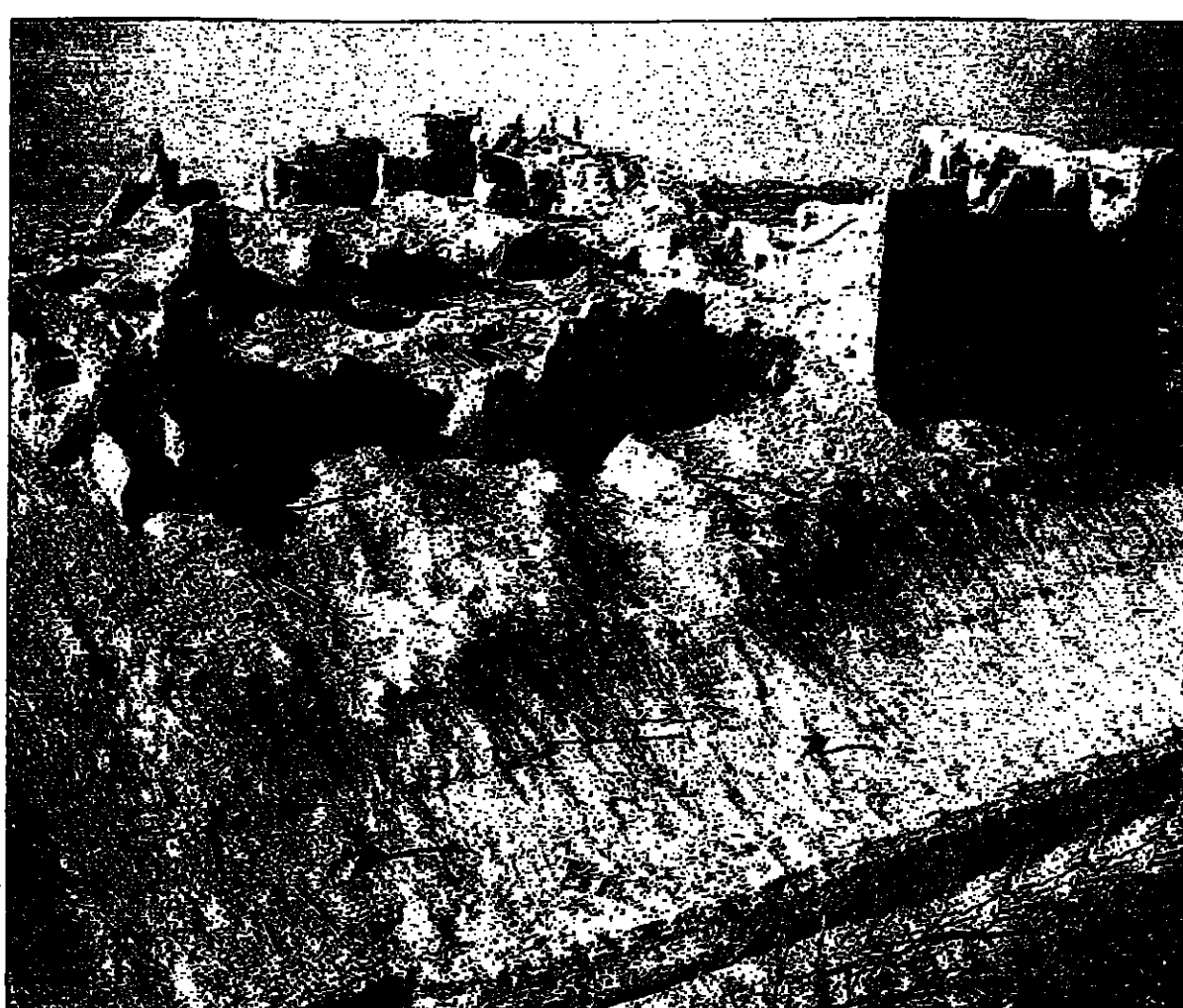
From Patricia Higgs, Bristol: Disney should give much reduced entrance fees to people who are not able to leave their wheelchairs. My son, who broke his neck in 1986, visited Disneyland Paris



with his family in March. He was charged full price and could use very little. The excuse was 'health and safety'.

From Jo Cleary and Tim Hughes, Nottingham: Michael Woods (Weekend, May 17) writes as though eastern England has just been opened to cyclists. The quiet lanes, bridleways and villages have always been available to anybody with a bicycle. Just pick up an Ordnance Survey map, follow its small yellow roads and obtain accommodation details from a tourist information centre. But don't treat any route as the only path: use it as a basis for making your own discoveries of Britain's quarter of a million miles of country lanes.

• We welcome letters on holiday travel. Send them to Letters, Travel Department, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN or fax 0171 252 5124.



The abbey at Montecassino, once the most important in western Christendom, in its restored glory, left, and after it was bombed during the Second World War, right

Great abbeys of Italy

A NEW tour in October from archaeology and ancient history specialist Andante Travel (01980 610555) traces the beginnings of Christianity in Rome and the rise of the great abbeys of central Italy.

Starting with catacombs and monuments of early Christians, the tour then takes in the monastic establishments at Subiaco, and several other abbeys and villas as well as Montecassino, once the most important abbey in western Christendom, now reconstructed after being obliterated during the Second World War. The nine-day trip costs £1,126 which covers flights, all meals and entrance fees.

Air pass

LATIN American Air Passes from Journey Latin America (0181 747 3108) enable travel-

lers to notch up the miles. Using its Visit Central America Airpass makes it possible to combine Central and South America; a typical 4,794 mile route from Mexico to Guatemala City, San Jose and Rio costs from £331, just 7p a mile. The Mercosur airpass provides a cheap way of linking Brazil with Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay; a route including Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Asuncion, Rio, Iguaçu and Salvador costs £260, which works out at 6p a mile.

FOR THOSE who prefer a donkey to a rucksack to carry your luggage as you walk the Brittany coast, the mountains above the Côte d'Azur or in the Cevennes, you can take a package that includes hotel or gîte accommodation, route planner and the use of a donkey from the Federation Nationale Anes et Randonnées. Telephone (from the UK) 00 33 492 652252. Donkey rental costs about £22-£30 a day (£130-£200) a week.

Ape rescue

IF YOU want to help orangutans which have been rescued from the pet trade, or from capture during logging, you can join world expert Dr Birute Galikas's project to monitor how they re-adapt to the wild in the tropical rainforests of Borneo.

Two-week environmental holidays are organised by the environmental travel firm Discovery Initiatives (0171 229 9881), staying in a forest lodge just outside the Tanjung Puting National Park during June and July. The cost is £2,145 all inclusive.

Cruising

WITH cruising now Britain's fastest growing holiday sector, direct sell Portland Holidays (0990 002200) is introducing a Far East cruise-and-stay fort-

JILL CRAWSHAW'S INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL TIPS

night in its summer 1998 programme. A week's cruise on board the 900 passenger Superstar Gemini costs from £945-£1,199 including flights, and starts at Phuket in Thailand and sails to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, the island of Langkawi and back to Phuket, where passengers spend the last six nights. On stay-put holidays, the cheapest in next year's brochure is a week's self-catering in Palma, Majorca for the first week in May for £59, rising to £249 in high season. Children get a 25 per cent discount.

Gambian roots

THE Roots Homecoming Festival in The Gambia from June 14-21 commemorates the 300th anniversary of the transportation of millions of Africans into slavery, is to be a celebration of Gambian culture through music, dance and arts. West African specialist The Gambia Experience (01703 730888) has flights only for £248, and flights with a week's B&B from £318.

Though West Africa has nothing like the big game of East and Southern Africa, it does have a profusion of bird life, with some 250 species spotted in and around the River Gambia. A birdwatching safari with expert Clive Barlow costs £768 for half-board and flights.

Fast movers

DESPITE World Champion Darnot Hill's recent results, Grand Prix fever continues to grip the British public. During the Silverstone Grand Prix the Hilton National in Warwick is offering a three-night B&B break from the July 11-14 July. The price of £397 includes two dinners, a talk by former Formula 1 driver Derek Warwick, a chance to watch qualifying sessions on

the Saturday and Grandstand seats for the big race on Sunday.

From June 20-22 at its Portsmouth Hotel, two nights half-board, entrance to the Goodwood Festival of Speed and tickets to horse racing at Goodwood cost £219. Reservations and details of other special motoring events from 0800 856 8002.

If you feel like a high octane weekend behind the wheel, the Nigel Mansell Racing School on the Brands Hatch circuit offers a day's tuition including five solo laps in a racing car, staying two nights at Brandishatch Place (01474 872239), for £210 per person including breakfast. A similar arrangement at Donington Park Race Track with the Jim Russell Driving School, with accommodation at The Priest House (01332 810649) costs £220.

VISAS for Lebanon (from where the Pope has recently returned) may now be obtained for £10 for

15 days on your arrival at the airport, thankfully, instead of the previous tedious procedures that took place via the Embassy. Middle East specialist Jamin Tours (01628 531121) offers three nights B&B weekends in Beirut for £488, including flights.

Sardinia sun

A NEW weekly air service runs until the October 4 between Stansed and Alghero in Sardinia. During May and June, Holiday Options (01444 881414) is offering return flights from £149, and one week self-catering holidays including flights from £199-£219.

Quids in

WITH sterling the healthiest it has been against the French franc for some years, staying in the small, family-run Logis hotels and sampling regional cooking and wines is better value than ever. It is now possible to book the accommo-

modation in advance in this country, as well as getting help with finding establishments to suit your planned itinerary from Logis of Great Britain (01865 875888). The average B&B price per couple in France is £45.50. There are also 375 Logis in Britain, but the B&B price per couple is higher, around £60.

SHORT break cruises to Norway from ColorLine (019296 1313) include a minicruise sailing from Newcastle to Bergen, with time to go ashore for shopping and sightseeing for £69 per person. A four-day cruise with one night's accommodation in Bergen costs £99. Under-16s pay 50 per cent.

Novel idea

A MADAME BOVARY trail around 40 miles or so of the Seine Maritime, links sites believed to have inspired Flaubert's classic novel. A leaflet in English leaflet is available from the Syndicat d'Initiative des Trois Vallées (00 33 235 23 40 74).

TRAVEL NEWS

Amex tests debit card

HOLIDAYMAKERS will be able to budget better for the trip to America this summer as American Express tests its first debit card in the UK, with dollars pre-loaded onto the card as a form of electronic travellers cheque.

The card can then be used as a normal debit card at Amex retail outlets or at cash dispensers.

"One of the reasons why holiday travellers like to have travellers cheques is that there is a finite amount of money and they can budget better," says Henry Autrey, Amex senior vice-president for its travellers cheques group.

"We are looking at different forms of cash. Electronic applications in travel are changing the way people are thinking about travel and how to pay for it." Around 1,000 of the cards will be issued in the pilot study with Lunn Poly, Lloyds and the Royal Bank of Scotland.

But early figures show that the card may prove a false economy. British people are putting an average £300 on the card, compared to £67 when buying ordinary travellers cheques.

GOLF for under £20 a day is on offer to Britanny holiday makers who buy four or so day passes. Cresta Holiday (0161-929 1311) is selling the passes for £77 and £112 respectively. They can be used at seven courses in south Brittany. The company has one week holidays from £83 per person, based on four sharing.

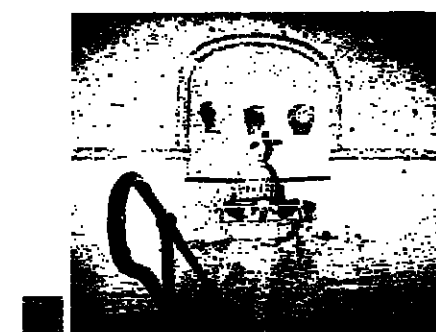
TRAVEL bookings via the Internet will have a worldwide value of £500 million this year — but the figure will rise to £5 billion by 2002, according to a US research company. However, many British holiday-makers still value the services of a travel agent, said Peter Shanks, managing director of Going Places. The company sold two million holidays last year — and only one was through the Internet.

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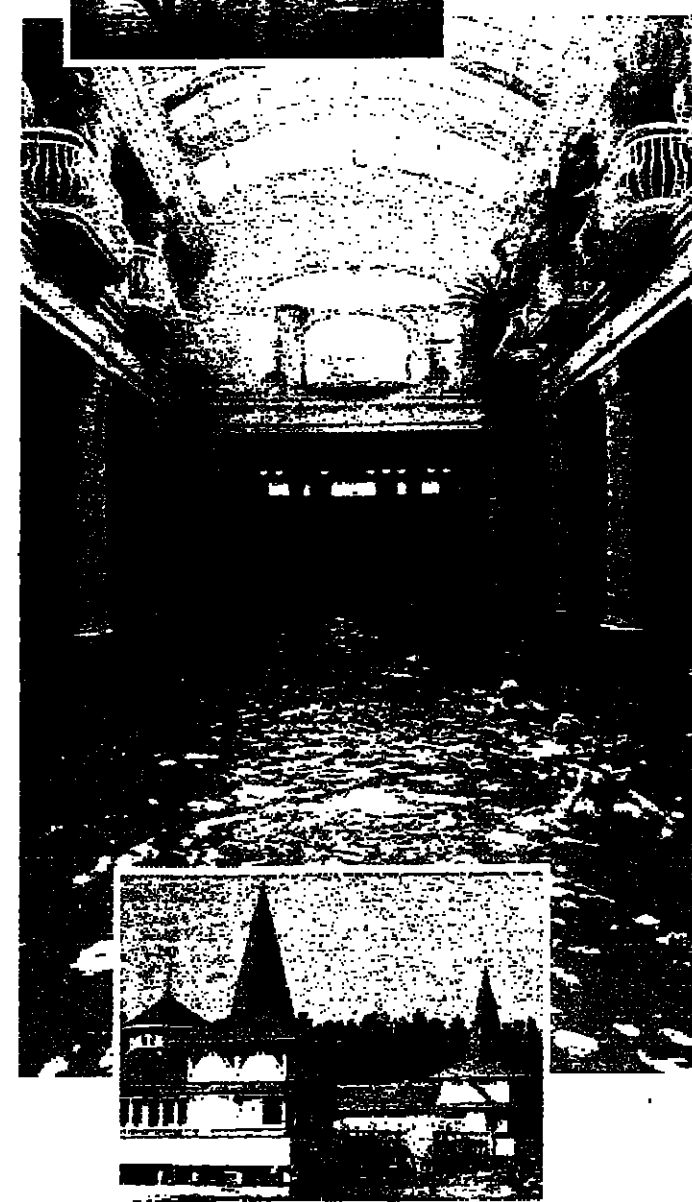
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Answers from page 25
YLEM
(c) The primordial ooze or substance from which all the elements in the universe were supposed by ancient philosophers to have been formed. Thought by the ancients to be water, by the moderns to be hydrogen, and by Chinese take-aways to be monosodium glutamate.
CONTRAINDICATED
(b) Inadvisable, having indications of 'don't do it'. It comes from the jargons of medicine and pharmacology. "For the treatment of hangover, amputation is contraindicated."
TRISTILOQUY
(b) A dull and depressing speech. From the Latin *tristis* sad and *loquor, loqui* to speak. "Ladies and gentlemen, to put the final fitting cap on an unforgettable evening, one of Scotland's leading tristiloquists, Major Campbell-Gordon-Bagpipedrone."
IGNIS FATUUS
(c) "False fire", a will-o'-the-wisp, the elusive lights generated by marsh gas at night and likely to lure unwary travellers from their path. Hamlet, after *The Mousetrap* breaks up in confusion: "What! frightened with false fire!" As Damian and Gwendolyn arrive arm-in-arm for the party: "Look, the fatuous with the ignis fatuus."

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Britain: A nationwide selection of half-term events for the whole family, compiled by Jane Bidder...

Outings to shout about

SOUTH WEST

Sally Wicked: Name of the children's events at the Salisbury Festival. Activities include a kettle drum workshop, arionettes, the "hat" story, open-the-fridge game and Dick King-Smith in person. May 25-June 1. www.salisburyfestival.co.uk (01223 323983).

Now long, short, large, half: Scientific measurement experience. Daily until June 8. 10am-5pm. Adults £5, children £2.50, family ticket £15. [Exploratory Hands-on Science Centre, Bristol Old Station, Temple Meads, Bristol](http://www.exploratoryhands-on.co.uk) (0117 407 9000).

Team Engines: Also vintage cars, play area, picnic sites and fairground organs. Today - May 26, 11am-5pm. Adults £5, children free. Separate admission for bird gardens: adults £4.30, children £2.30, family £12.80. [Woodstream Vintage Rally, Code Bird Gardens, Rode, Somerset](http://www.woodstreamvintage.co.uk) (01373 830326).

Children's Entertainment: Dance displays and fireworks at Brixham Heritage Festival. Today to May 31, from 1.45pm.

COUNTRYWIDE KEY

South West: Wilt, Dorset, Avon, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, South East: Beds, Bucks, Herts, Essex, Kent, West and East Sussex, Surrey, Oxford, Hants, Berks, East Angles: Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambs, East Midlands: Derby, Notts, Northants.

Leics, Lincs, West Midlands: Staffs, Salop, Warwick, Hereford and Wores, Glos, North West: Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire, North: Northumberland, Cumbria, Durham, Cleveland, North East: North, West and South Yorkshire, Humberside.

Some events free. [Various venues in Brixham, Devon](http://www.variousvenuesinbrixham.co.uk) (01803 85526).

Shire Horse Rides: Fancy dress, street entertainment and fairground rides at the Weymouth Oyster Festival. May 25, 11am-5pm. Free. [The Harbour, Weymouth, Dorset](http://www.theharbour.co.uk) (01305 772444).

Man Overboard: Demonstrations by canoe lifeguards, trawler race, fairground, face painting and fancy dress at the Weymouth Trawler Race and Water Carnival. May 26, 10am-4pm. Free. [The Harbour, Weymouth, Dorset](http://www.theharbour.co.uk) (01305 772444).

Get Steamed Up: Watch a 1910, 300-horsepower steam engine at work. May 25-26, 10.30am-5pm. Adults £5.

children £2.50, family ticket £13.50. The disabled should telephone first. [Coldharbour Mill Working Wool Museum, Uffculme, Cullington, Devon](http://www.coldharbourmill.co.uk) (01894 840960).

Zoo Trail: Jolly jungle bouncy castle, face painting and games at the Paws Summer Fayre at Paignton Zoo. May 26, 10am-4pm. Zoo open daily, 10am-6pm. Adults £6.60, children £4.50. [Paignton Zoological and Botanical Gardens, Toines Road, Paignton, Devon](http://www.paigntonzoo.co.uk) (01803 557479).

Tug of War: As well as one man and his pig, a water rescue dogs demonstration and other events at Country Fair. May 26, 10am-6pm. Adults £4, under-12s free. [Country Fair, Quainton, Buckinghamshire](http://www.countryfair.co.uk) (01296 655720).

Sherborne Castle, Sherborne, Dorset (01963 23630).

SOUTH EAST

On Their Bikes: Victorian-costumed cyclists, steam train rides, Punch and Judy, art competition. May 25, 26, 11am-6pm. Also open May 28, 11am-5pm. For steam rides, Adults £4.50, children £3. [Quainton Railway, Quainton, Buckinghamshire](http://www.quaintonrailway.co.uk) (01296 655720).

Station Signal Box Demonstration: Also rides on steam trains. May 25-26, 10am-5pm. Open every day, 10am-5pm. Adults £5, children £3.30, family ticket £4.80. [Didcot Railway Centre, Great Western Society, Didcot, Oxfordshire](http://www.didcotrailwaycentre.co.uk) (01235 817200).

Touch, Explore and Experiment: Hands-on "scientific" exhibits at Curiosity, the "friendly science exhibition for all ages". Open weekends and school holidays, 10am-4pm. Adults £2.10, children £1.80, family ticket £7.20. [Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, Oxford](http://www.oxfordplayhouse.co.uk) (01865 798600).

Circus Skills Workshop: Try plate-spinning, parachute games and fruit juggling. May 28, 11am-5pm. For four to nine-year-olds. Children £10. If disabled, telephone first. Booking essential. [Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, Oxford](http://www.oxfordplayhouse.co.uk) (01865 798600).

Holiday Trail: Questions on Roman times and the Second World War with this family quiz. Also walk down a reconstructed 1940s street. Until June 1, 10am-5pm. Free. [White Cliffs Experience, Market Square, Dover, Kent](http://www.whitecliffsexperience.co.uk) (01304 210101).

Follow the Magic Bean: Treasure hunt; get real beans to grow at home; meet furry creatures in costume; watch blacksmiths at work. Adults £5, children £2.50. [Amberley Museum, Houghton Bridge, Amberley, West Sussex](http://www.amberleymuseum.co.uk) (01793 831370).

Medieval Longbows: jurglers, still walker, knights, falcon flying, Punch and Judy at this festival of entertainment. Today to May 26, 10am-6pm. Adults £3, children £1. [Norbury Park, Leatherhead, Surrey](http://www.norburypark.co.uk) (01344 874787).

Meet Medieval Apothecaries: watch archery and falconry, get lost in the maze. Today to May 26, 11am-5pm. Adults £6.50, children £3.50, family ticket £16.30. [Hever Castle, Hever, Kent](http://www.hevercastle.co.uk) (01732 865224).

Take the Duckling Trail: Enter the name-the-duckling competition and watch ducklings hatch in incubators. Today to June 1, 1.30-4pm. Adults £4.25, children £2.25, family ticket £10.75. [Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Mill Road, Arundel, West Sussex](http://www.wildfowl.co.uk) (01903 863355).

Circus Workshop: Plus maypole dancing and Punch and Judy. May 25-26, 10am-5pm. Admission free. [Abbey Green, Battle, East Sussex](http://www.abbeygreen.co.uk) (01424 774229).

Piggy Drawing: For a competition at the Piggy Picnic. Wash a pig at Pig Bathing and watch the tiny trotters going over an obstacle course. May 25-26, Adult £3.25, children £1.50. [Rare Breeds Centre, Highland Farm, Ashford, Kent](http://www.rarebreeds.co.uk) (01233 861493).

Teddy Bears' Picnic: Also puppet workshops, clown, teddy portraits, face painting. May 26, 11am-5pm. Adults £4, children £2. Free with teddy and adult. [Michelham Priory, Upper Dicker, East Sussex](http://www.michelham.co.uk) (01323 844224).

Meet the President of the USA: Plus Lily Langtry, Doc Holiday and Uncle Sam on his stunts at the Country and Western Craft Fayre. Also stunt men, mock gunfights, rope spinning and Punch and Judy. Today to May 26, 10am-6pm. Also stunt men, mock gunfights, rope spinning and Punch and Judy. Adult £3, children £1. [Aldenhams Country Park, Elstree, Hertfordshire](http://www.altenhamcountrypark.co.uk) (01344 874787).

Clay Modelling: Mould your own mummy mask and learn about flying goddesses at these series of half-term workshops. Part of the exhibition of Pharaoh's People. Exhibition until October. Workshops May 26-30, £5 per session; museum free. [Museum of St Albans, Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts](http://www.museumofstalbans.co.uk) (01727 819340).

Barleylands Family Weekend: With steam engines, vintage tractors, farm animals, children's entertainment, farm museum, glass blowing and miniature steam railway. May 25-26, 10am-5pm. Adults £3, children £1.50. [Barleylands Farm Museum, Barleylands Road, Billericay, Essex](http://www.barleylandsfarm.co.uk) (01268 532253).

Mess About in Boats: A Wind in the Willows-style day at Wendover Canal Festival, with canal boat rides and classic cars. May 25-26, 10am-5pm. Appearance by the Lord Mayor of London at noon. Adults £3, children £1. [New Mill, Tring, Herts](http://www.newmill.co.uk) (01442 823376).

Children at Play: Catch a glimpse of 18th-century living with walk-around actors who will introduce their servants and discuss etiquette of the day. May 25-26, from midday. Adults £2.50, children £1.30. [Chiswick House, Burlington Lane, London W4](http://www.chiswickhouse.co.uk) (0181 995 0508).

Origami: With plastic game shows and poetry readings are all part of the Challenge of Materials week. Today to June 1. Adults £5.95, children £3.20, family ticket £27.50. [Science Museum, Exhibition Road, South Kensington, London SW7](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk) (0171 938 8222).

Rock History: Put your hand into an imprint made by Eric Clapton, Gloria Estefan and other rock stars. Part of a "rock and pop experience". Open daily from 11am (today on Tuesdays) to 5pm (10pm Fridays and Saturdays). Adults £7.95, children £6.50. [Rock Circus, Piccadilly, London W1](http://www.rockcircus.co.uk) (0171 734 7203).

The Ultimate: Teenage day out with in-line skating.

bumgee jumping, assault course, skateboards, dodgems, computer games etc. at the Capital Radio 95.8 Extravaganza. Today to May 27, 10am-7pm (6pm Tuesday). Admission £6. [Earls Court Exhibition Centre, Warwick Road, London SW5](http://www.earls.co.uk) (0171 420 0958).

Light and Electricity: Play with lenses, lights and lasers. Today to June 1, 10am-6pm. Adults £5.85, children £2.95. [Emergent Services, Includes helicopter flights and rescue recreation scenes. May 25-26, 10am-6pm. Adults £2, children £1. \[Royal Air Force Museum, Grange Park Way, London NW9\]\(http://www.royalairforce.co.uk\) \(0181 200 1765\).](http://www.emergent.co.uk)

Backward Somersault: Can you do one while drinking a glass of water on your forehead and plucking the nose? Tomas Kubinek, "master of the impossible", will demonstrate. May 26, 11am and 2pm. Adults £6. [Purcell Room, Belvedere Road, London SE1](http://www.purcellroom.co.uk) (0171 960 4242).

Farm Animal Weekend: Watch rare breeds such as Gloucester Old Spot pigs and their litters. Today, tomorrow, midday-5pm. Also open during the week. Adults £3.20, children £1.20. [Farmland Museum, Denry Abbey, Ely Road, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire](http://www.farmlandmuseum.co.uk) (01223 860988).

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Tudor Times: Recreation of Tudor life. Today to May 26, 11am-6pm. Mingle with volunteers in costume who will stick to their roles. Adults £7.50, children £5. **Kentwell Hall, Long Melford, Suffolk** (01787 310207).

Give Granny the Wheel: Go-karts, grass carts and quad bikes: tuition provided. May 25-26, 10am until dusk. Adults £6, children £3. **Manby Showground, Manby, near Louth, Lincolnshire** (01775 640737).

How do they do that? Watch a pair of working steam engines built in 1825 to haul wagons up the steep Cromford and High Peak Railway. Also quarry site and fossils. Today to May 26 and other selected

days through the year, from 10.30am. Adults 70p, children 40p. **Middleton Top Engine House, Rise End, Wiltshire** (01629 823204).

Fun of the Fair: Punch and Judy, vintage fairground, old cars and play area at the Derbyshire Steam Fair. Today to May 26, 10am-6pm. **Hartington Moor showground, Ashbourne, Derby** (01663 732750).

Thomas the Tank Engine: A chance to meet the Fat Controller and Oswald, another talking engine. Today to June 1, 10.45am-4.15pm. Adult and two children, £7.95. **Midland Railway Centre, Butterley Station, Ripley, Derby** (01773 747674).

Street Theatre: Plus dancing and crafts. Today to May 26, 10.30am-5.30pm. Admission free. **Ludlow Castle Ruin, Castle Square, Ludlow, Shropshire** (01588 650307).

Cry Wolf: Learn about the behaviour of American Timber wolves and see them at close quarters at this Wolf Weekend. May 25-26, 1.30am-6pm. Also see goats, sheep and lambs and leopard and tiger cubs being bottle-fed. Adults £2.95, children £1.60. **Sleepy Hollow Farm Park, Sheep House Farm, Draycote Road, Blockley, Gloucestershire** (01386 701264).

Catch the Cheese: Cheese rolling contest where large pieces are rolled down a hill; you stand at the bottom to catch them. May 26, 6pm. Admission free. **Coopers Hill, Brockworth, Gloucestershire** (01452 425073).

Animal Day: Includes 6am dawn chorus stroll tomorrow with an RSPB warden to identify birds. Adults £2.50, children £1.50. Meet at Haweswater, Naddle Bridge. Also the Brookhole Sett (club for juniors) is holding T-shirt printing workshops, a mini-beast safari and a "Making Friends with the Earth" session tomorrow. Other events during half-term. Disabled, telephone first. **Brookhole Lake District National Park Centre, Windermere, Cumbria** (015394 46601).

Take your own glider: And join in the Slope Open Day model gliding rally or go and watch. May 25-26 from 11am.

Railway Museum: Saturdays and Sundays, 11am-5pm, and selected days throughout the summer. Adults £2.50, children £1.50. **Rutland Railway Museum, Ashwell Road, Cottesmore, Leicestershire** (01572 813203).

Castle Park Capers: Instrumental workshops, duels in authentic armour, guided walks, magician, medieval games, drawing competition and teddy bears' concert. May 26, 10am-5.30pm. Most events free. **Castle Park, Leicester** (01522 709984).

Balloon Modelling: Part of the District Arts Festival. Today, 10am-1pm at Bowen Street, Daventry. Other events include free puppet theatre at Braunston, today to May 26 and the Curious Cat workshop for eight to 12-year-olds at Daventry Museum. **Various venues around Daventry, Northants** (01327 302419).

Jousting Week: Mock battles but real swords and horses. Today, tomorrow, 10am-6pm. Adults £8.95, children £5.40. **Warwick Castle, Warwick** (01926 406600).

and learn about trees with an expert. May 26, 1-4pm. Adults and children £5.50. **Westonbirt Arboretum, Forest Enterprise, Westonbirt, Gloucestershire** (01666 880220).

Morris Dancing: Plus story telling, craft workshop and a chance to join in the dancing for all the family at the Chester Folk Festival. Today, tomorrow, 8am until evening. Admission free. Extra charge for concerts. **The Morris Dancer, Chester Road, Kelsall** (01244 330424).

Close Encounters with Weird and Wonderful Creatures: This is the title of a two-mile walk for accompanied over-eights to examine a Cumbrian pond. Wear wellies. Part of various events, including a junior tug of war, at the Conistow Water Festival. Today to June 1. Adults £2.50, children £1.50. **Meet at Conistow Tourist Centre, Ruskin Road, Conistow, Cumbria** (015394 41707/41533).

Animal Day: Includes 6am dawn chorus stroll tomorrow with an RSPB warden to identify birds. Adults £2.50, children £1.50. Meet at Haweswater, Naddle Bridge. Also the Brookhole Sett (club for juniors) is holding T-shirt printing workshops, a mini-beast safari and a "Making Friends with the Earth" session tomorrow. Other events during half-term. Disabled, telephone first. **Brookhole Lake District National Park Centre, Windermere, Cumbria** (015394 46601).

Take your own glider: And join in the Slope Open Day model gliding rally or go and watch. May 25-26 from 11am.

Admission free. **Castle Inn Hotel, Bassenethwaite, Cumbria** (016973 51822).

Animal Magic: Find out which particular animals live in our homes in this exhibition on how we love and loathe certain creatures. Ends May 31, but museum open daily 10am-5pm. Adults £1.95, children £1. **Hancock Museum, Barras Breige, Newcastle upon Tyne** (0191-222 7418).

Carnival: With procession, funfair and sideshows. May 24. Admission free. **Barnard Castle Meet, Barnard Castle, Durham** (01833 638836).

Street Theatre: Children's village with things to do, pagents etc at the North Shields Fishquay Festival. Today to May 26, 10am-9pm. Admission free. **Various venues, North Shields** (0191-200 5157).

Sheep Shearing: And tractor rides, friendly animals. May 25-26. Also open daily for tractor rides and animal feeding. 10.30am-5pm. (Closed Saturdays.) Adults £3, children £2, family ticket £9. **Hall Hill Farm, Lanchester, Co Durham** (01388 730300).

Mr Topper's Clown Show: Bouncy castle, roundabouts, show jumping, stunt displays and parachutes at the Northumberland Country Show. May 26, 9am-6pm. Adults £5, children under 16 free. **Tynedale Park, Corbridge, Northumberland** (01434 344433).

Children's Festival: With treasure hunt, £1,000-worth of prizes, circus workshops and instrument-making etc. To June 1. Many events free. **Venues around Barnsley, South Yorks** (01226 774468).

Magical May Festival: For young and old. Baffling performances by top magicians. May 25-26, 11am-5pm. Adults £3.95, children £2.50. **Elsham Hall Country and Wildlife Park, Elsham, South Humberside** (01652 688698).

Open Farm Day: Watch hand and machine sheep shearing, a working commill, bread baking. Punch and Judy; children's rides available. May 25-26, 11am-4pm. Adults £1.50, children 75p. **Worsbrough Country Park, Park Road, Worsbrough Bridge, South Yorkshire** (01226 774527).

Thomas the Tank Engine: This time the popular character is giving away gifts at Embsay steam railway; there will also be a children's entertainer. May 24-26, 10am-4pm. Adults and children £3.50. Includes gift. **Embsay and Bolton Abbey Steam Railway, Embsay Station, Embsay, North Yorkshire** (01756 794727).

Children's Garden Quiz: For budding horticulturists. Also a model village and playground. May 24-30, 10am-4pm. Adults £3.40, children free. **Harlow Carr Botanical Gardens, Crag Lane, Harrogate** (01423 565418).

Scarborough Fayre: With street entertainers, morris dancers, marching bands and sideshows. Today to June 22. Admission free. **Scarborough streets, North Yorks** (01723 369151).

Fan Day Out: With Punch and Judy, bouncy castle and children's games. Tomorrow from 12.30pm. Adults £3.80, children £1.90, family ticket £9. **Ryedale Centre Spring Fair, Nunnington Hall, Nunnington, North Yorks** (01439 748283).

Magical May Festival: For young and old. Baffling performances by top magicians. May 25-26, 11am-5pm. Adults £3.95, children £2.50. **Elsham Hall Country and Wildlife Park, Elsham, South Humberside** (01652 688698).

Open Mill Day: At the last working postmill in the north of England. May 26, 2-5pm. Adults £1, children 50p. **Wrayby Windmill, Mill Lane, Wrayby, South Humberside** (01652 653699).

Bouncy Castle: Plus steam trains, trolley-bus rides etc at the Whit Gala Day. May 26 from 11am. Adults £3.50, children £1.50. Families £9. **Sandtoft Transport Centre, Belton Road, Sandtoft, South Yorkshire** (01302 364330).

Under-16 Disco: Plus sports days, kaleidoscope discovery workshop, under-12s talent show, pirate play and more at the Milford Haven Festival of Fun. Location varies according to event. Today to June 1. Most events free. **Various venues, Milford Haven, Dyfed** (01646 692505).

Rumpelstiltskin: A name never forgotten in this exciting puppet show. May 30-31, 2pm and 7pm. **Torch Theatre, Milford Haven** (01646 694192).

Bring Your Own Teddy Bear: To the Rupert Bear Family Day and enter the best-dressed bear competition in the Rupert Bear and Trusty the Hedgehog Family Day. Tackle a quiz with prizes and enjoy a magic show. May 28, 10am-5pm. Adults £2.60, children £1.30, family ticket £6.50. **Colby Woodland Garden, Stepaside, Pembrokehire** (01834 818855).

Scottish International Children's Festival: Children's theatre, music, dance, magic and puppet shows. Today, 9.30am-5pm; tomorrow, 11am-4.30pm. **Inverleith Park, Edinburgh** (0131-553 7700).

The Singing Kettle: The busy road show. Come dressed as a traffic warden, police or lollipop person. Today, 11am and 2pm. Adults and children from £6. **MacRobert Arts Centre, University of Stirling** (01786 461081).

Pan for Gold: Enter a treasure hunt and see how the experts do it at the British Gold Panning Championships. Today, tomorrow, 10am-5pm. Adults £3.50, children £1.50. **Wanlockhead Lead Mining Museum, Dumfriesshire** (01659 74387).

Theme Park: Claims to be a big, scary, wet, tall, fast experience. Open every day, 11am-10pm. Admission free but each ride has own charge. **Strathclyde Country Park, Motherwell, Lanarkshire** (01698 333999).

Handle an Animal: Choice of animal "will depend on the day" but wildlife inhabitants include bears, Scottish wildcats, wolves, lynxes and golden eagles. Today to May 26, but the centre is also open daily, 10am-4.30pm. Adults £1.50, children £1.05. **Camperdown Wildlife Centre, Coupar Angus Road, Dundee** (01382 432689).

Gingerbread Fun Day: With story telling, face painting, sky diving and puppets. Today, 11am-4pm. Free. **The Annadale Embankment, near the Botanic Gardens, Belfast** (01232 231417).

Funzone: Go-karting. It's A Knockout, hot-air ballooning, bands and merry-making. Also appearance by one of the Gladiators. May 31, 10am-5pm. Adult £6, children £4. **Kings Hall, Balmoral, Belfast** (01232 790707).

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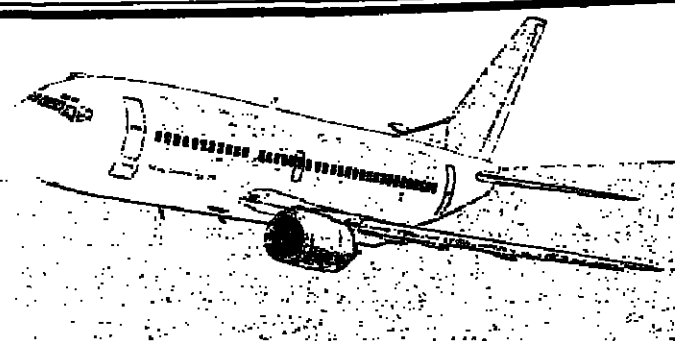
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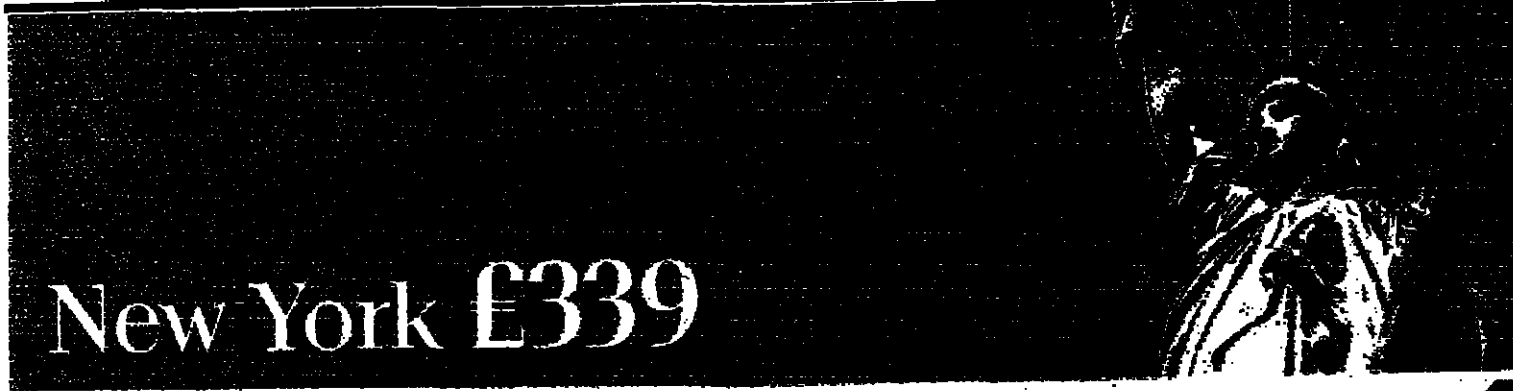
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AFRICA ZIMBABWE, KENYA, TANZANIA, NAMIBIA, BOTSWANA,

Fun in Olympic portions

0142
or 08
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HAR

CHES

by Raymond Keene

ONE obvious spin-off, much to IBM's advantage, of Deep Blue's victory against Kasparov would be to clone the Deep Blue program for use by PCs, and launch it on the world market. With IBM having generated a staggering estimated billion dollars-worth of publicity from the match, and with a confirmed record of 22 million Internet hits for the final game alone (the Atlanta Olympics, the previous record, attracted a mere 10 million), IBM is uniquely placed to reap a rich commercial harvest from the intellectual capital it has so spectacularly nurtured.

A further boon to both the advancement of science and the international chess community would be for IBM to enter Deep Blue into competitions against other great grandmasters, such as Anand, Karpov, Kramnik, Ivanchuk, Short and Polgar. If, as it is said, IBM is shy of allowing its program to compete openly, then chess players worldwide may consider lobbying the company (website: www.chess.ibm.com).

So is Deep Blue now the world's strongest chess player, or was the sensational outcome of the match caused mainly by Kasparov's poor psychological preparation? (Anand has accused Kasparov of treating the machine "like God.") The best way to find out would be for Kasparov to challenge Deep Blue to a 20-game match, with nothing less than his world title at stake. IBM could not refuse such a gauntlet without exposing itself to charges of cowardice. Here is how Kasparov missed his chances in game four.

22 a3. A human player would be puzzled by this and White's following manoeuvres. With this move, White is preparing to play b4, to chase away any black knight that reaches c5.

22 ... Ne6 23 Nc3 Nde5 24 b4 Nd7 25 Qd3 Qd7 26 b5

The parallel to game one, in which Deep Blue wrecked its own kingside with ... g5 and ... g4, is striking. Here, though, White is a pawn ahead and there is activity all over the board, so its self-inflicted weaknesses in the king's field are difficult to exploit.

28 ... Nde5 27 Qe3 Qe4 28 bxc6 bxc6 29 Rd1 Kc7 30 Kd1

Not 30 Rad5 Qe3+. 30 ... Qe3. After the game both 30 ... Qe4 and 30 ... Rf7 (with the plan of ... Rf8) were proposed as superior.

31 fxe3 Rf7 32 Rh3. Apparently inexplicable, but the idea is probably to play h5 and b6, in conjunction with Nd4, eliminating all the kingside pawns.

32 ... Re8 33 Nd4 Rf2 34 Rb1 Rg2 35 Nxe2 Rg4 36 Nxe3+ Nxe3 37 Nd4 Nc4

It is better to avoid the exchange of knights with 37 ... Nc5. The ending Kasparov strives for looks promising, but White has sufficient resources to hold the draw.

38 efxd4 Rxd4 39 Rg1 Rg4 40 Rf6 Rxc2 41 Rg7+ Kb6 42 Rb3+ Kc5 43 Rb7 Rf1+ 44 Rb1 Rf2 45 Rb4

White is now threatening Ra5 checkmate, so Black's hand is forced: 45 ... Rcl+. (If 45 ... Ra2+, 46 Kb1 Rxa3 47 Rxa3 Kxb4 48 Rb3 will be enough to draw.)

46 Rb1 Rxc2 47 Rb4 Rcl+ 48 Rb1 Rxb1+ 49 Kxb1 Rb2 50 Rb7 Rf2 51 Rb7 Kc4 52 Rb7 c5 53 e6 Rb4 54 e7 Rb4 55 e4 Kxb3 56 Kc1

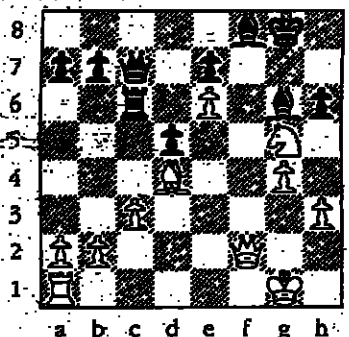
Draw agreed. One possible draw-variation is 56 ... c4 57 a5 c3 58 Kd1 d4 59 a6 d3 60 a7 d2 61 Rb7+.

WINNING MOVE

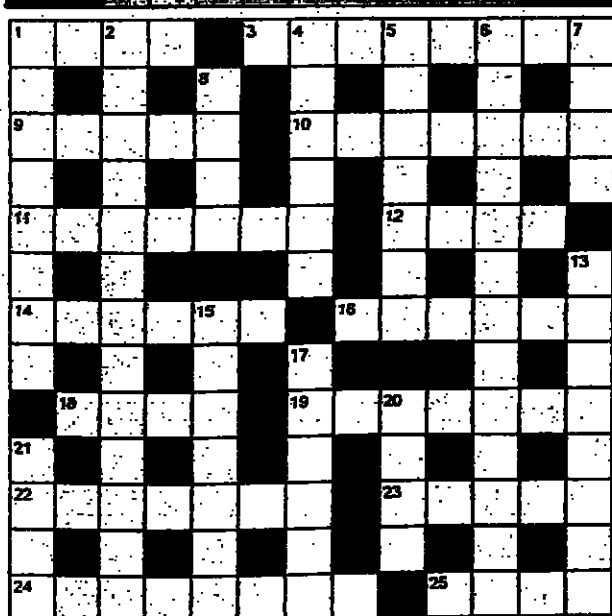
By Raymond Keene
White to play. This position is from the game Starck - Berthold, Gera 1962. White's pawn on e6 is a bone in Black's throat, controlling important squares and cutting communications between his forces. How did White make the most of this?

Send your answer on a postcard to *The Times*, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. The first correct answer drawn on Thursday will win a year's subscription to the Staunton Society, which includes a free invitation to the annual dinner at Simpson's-in-the-Strand. The answer will be published next Saturday.

Last week's solution: 1 Qe3+
Last week's winner: P Soper, Tilton-on-the-Hill, Leicester.



NO 1102



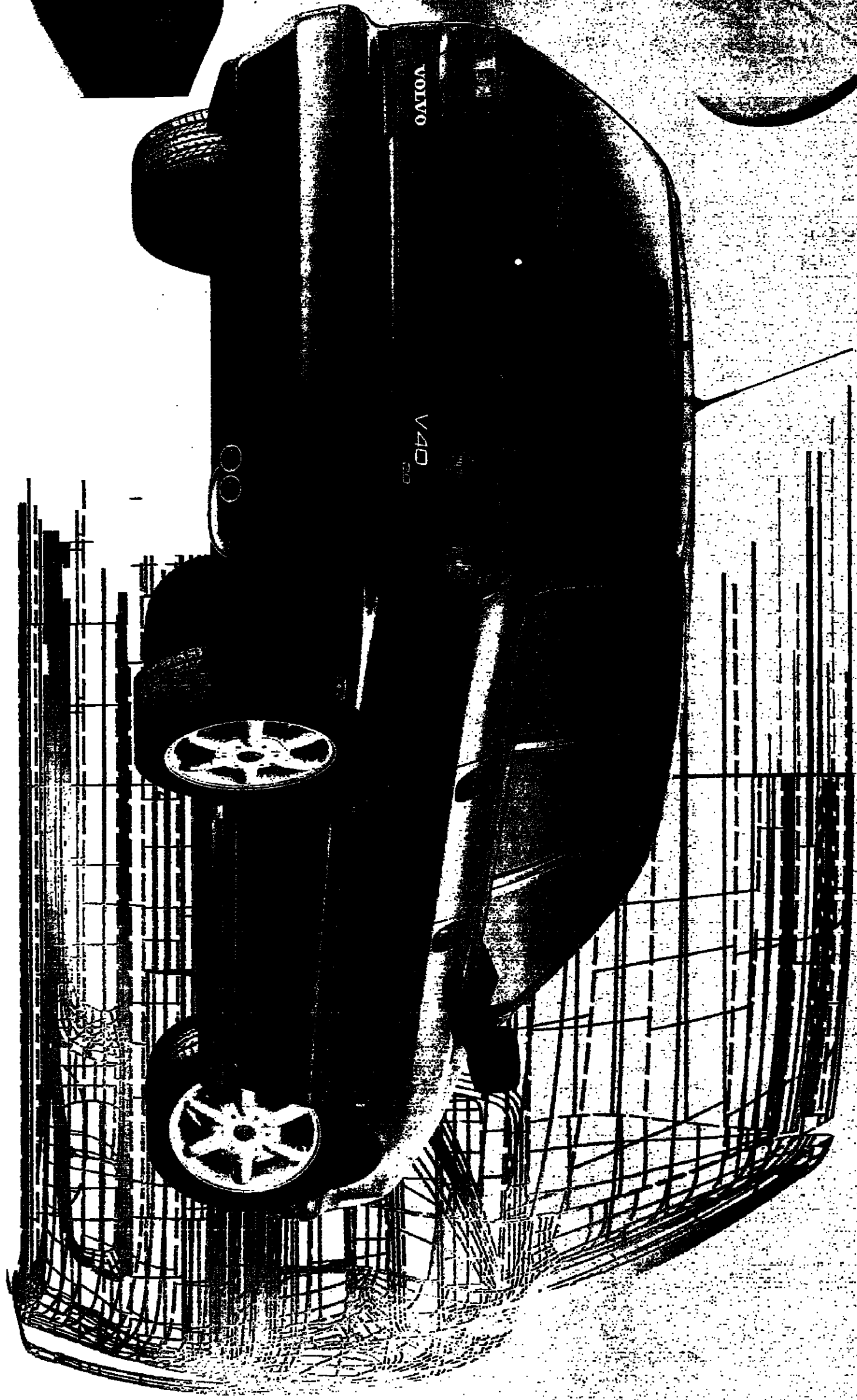
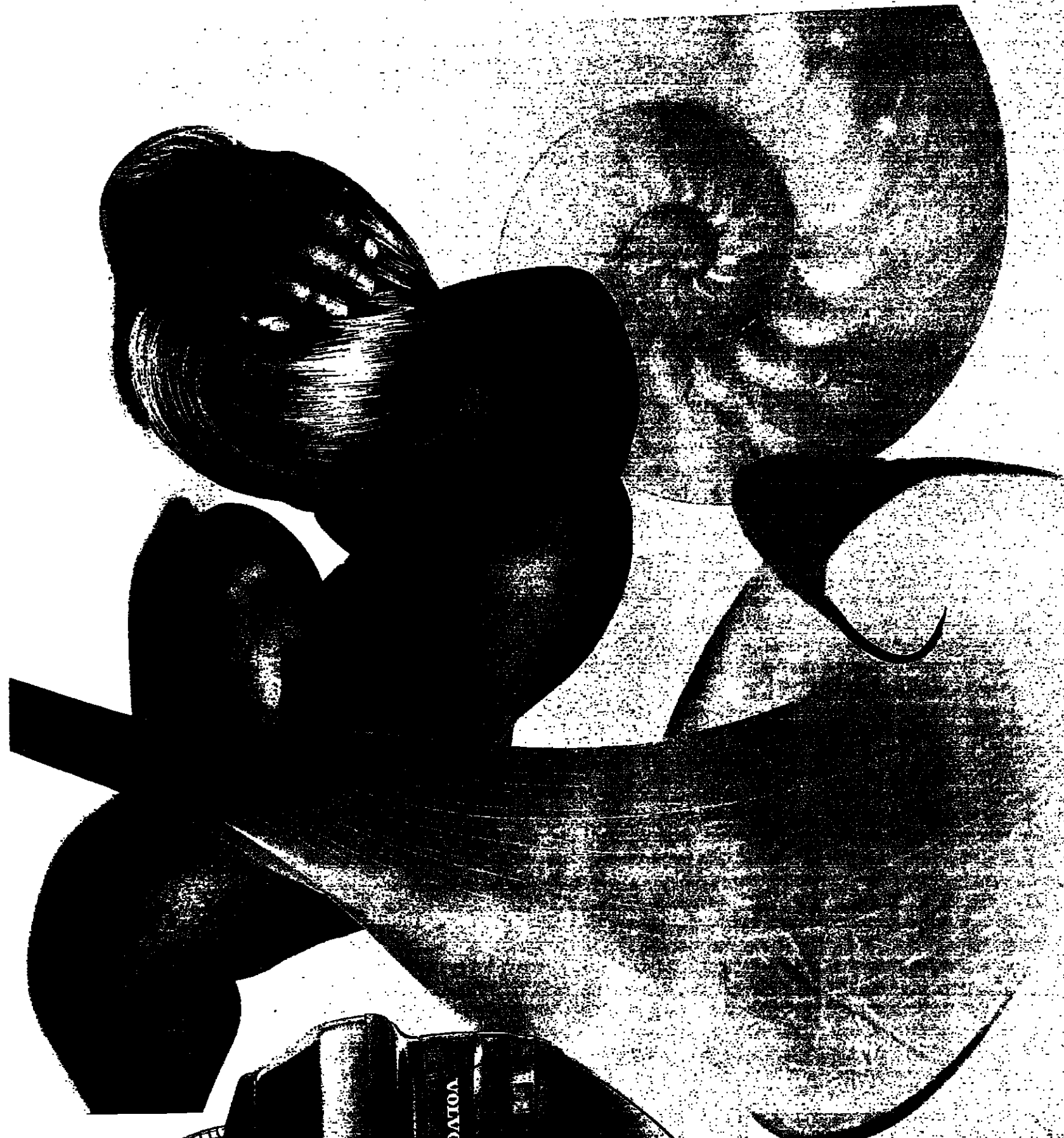
- ACROSS
- Construct the acquisitive on it (4)
 - (Do you) in one's head (8)
 - Uttered part of wheel (5)
 - Insincere talk; toilet article (7)
 - Badly-groomed (7)
 - Destiny (4)
 - Llama-like animal, its wool (4)
 - Hackneyed phrase (6)
 - (To) speak; wait, anxiously (4)
 - Brown village (7)
 - Idealistic (7)
 - Stinging voice; drift, meaning (5)
 - Crude mock-ups (of person) (8)
 - Disobey (4)
- DOWN
- Robust (8)
 - Easily outperform (5,5,3)
 - Feeble through exhaustion (6)
 - Tending to cry (7)
 - Wild extremists (7,6)
 - Scream; a Shetland I. (4)
 - Appear (4)
 - Sluggishness (8)
 - Aircraft-engine cover (7)
 - Odd coins (6)
 - An inventor; power unit (4)
 - Dumb (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1101
ACROSS: 1 See the light 8 Round 9 Chalice 10 Pair 11 Dead heat 15 Cleric 14 Curfew 17 Negligee 19 Pray 22 Profane 23 Kiosk 24 Tetrahedron
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هكذا من الاميل



IT'S BUILT ALONG THE SAME LINES AS OUR BIG ESTATES.
BUT WITHOUT ALL THE STRAIGHT LINES.

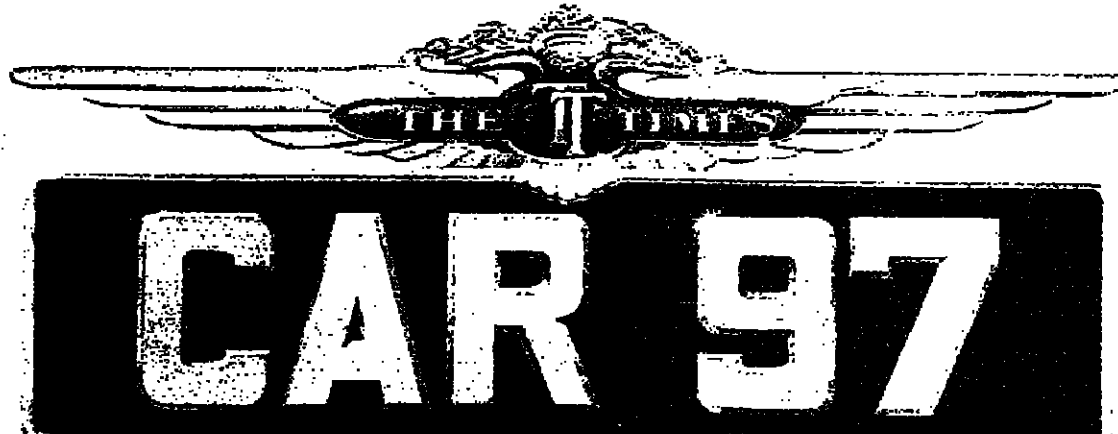
Introducing the Volvo V40. It's roomy, like the big estates. (There's 50 cubic feet of luggage space, and you can even fold the front passenger seat flat.) It's safe, like the big estates. (The V40 has SIPS with side airbags, driver's airbag and ABS brakes.) It's even surprisingly quick, just like the big estates (0-62 takes just 9.3 seconds in the 16 valve 2 litre model.) But the V40 has one thing the big estates don't have. Curves. The Italians, who know a thing or two about car design, recently voted it 'the most beautiful estate in the world'. And who are we to argue? The V40 from Volvo. It's smaller, but it's perfectly formed. From \$16,620 to \$19,920 on the road. Or from \$290 per month via Volvo Contract Hire. **VOLVO. A CAR YOU CAN BELIEVE IN.**

VOLVO
V40



How to pack a people mover to the limit

Page 3



Ticket offer for a quick drag

Page 10



SATURDAY MAY 24 1997

Eve-Ann Prentice discovers the problems of navigating for a rally driver skidding towards a hairpin bend at 90mph



Hall and Prentice prepare to set off. "In crutch-drooping fireproof overalls, I looked like Andy Pandy on a bad day... there were twinges when I learnt that you must write your blood group clearly on your overalls or helmet"

Hang on, are we still in Wales?

With as much calm as can be mustered by someone hurtling noisily and skidding at around 90mph towards a hairpin bend on a dirt track, I tell the driver to turn right.

As Stephen Hall's co-driver and navigator in the Mid-Wales Stages historic rally, he needs me to tell him what lies ahead as we career at literally breakneck speed along tracks which I would hesitate to negotiate at anything above second gear.

Then, horror of horrors. The hairpin transpires to turn left not right. I stare in disbelief at the hieroglyphics on my lap which are supposed to pass as route directions, then back at the world outside as it bucks and weaves in a blur of brown and green. My life doesn't flash before my eyes, but the forests of Powys do.

We are travelling so fast that before I have blinked, dumbstruck at the treachery which makes a right-hand hairpin on the map transform itself into a left-hand bend in real life, Hall has led his 1964 TR4 a merry little mad dance round the tight corner. I had got us into.

This is my first attempt at rallying, and could well have been my last were it not for Hall's patience, skill and experience. I wouldn't have blamed him for pitching me out and blackening my name forever in the rally fraternity.

Even though he was given confusing, wrong or even none of the information normally forthcoming from a rally co-driver, we end up fifth overall and first in class. I say "we", but the Triumph had the Triumph was all his — especially considering that his navigational bandicoot was compounded by a puncture on a high-speed off-road section and a cracked-out clutch for the last two sections. An over-enthusiastic rev limiter also caused him a few anxious moments as the engine died inauspiciously on three or four occasions until one of our two-man service team diagnosed

"Are you the reporter?" he asked in beguilingly lilting Welsh tones, then collapsed in uncontrollable laughter at the apparent thought of a total newcomer to rallying on the cusp of imminent terror

the fault and disconnected the relevant wires.

This may sound like a string of faults, but you have to feel the punishment meted out to these cars to appreciate how robust they are. Parts are made as light in weight as possible, yet are subjected to such extremes of stopping, speeding and starting that it seems a miracle they survive the first mile of off-road hammering.

The oft-fun Hall, who restores and services Triumph cars through his company TR Enterprises, based at Blidworth in Nottinghamshire, has been entering historic rallies for the past five years. Before that he used to go circuit racing in a Peugeot and says he has won "everything in the TR world that there is to win". His father, Ron, who is a partner in the firm, faithfully follows his son round the country and lends to the servicing.

Tens of thousands of people take part in rallies in Britain every year, 70 per cent of them in local events where competition licences are not required. Five thousand people hold competition licences and two million turn out to watch the RAC rally. So if you are among the growing band of people interested in the sport but have not yet tried it, what is it like?

My trepidation before the event was not lessened by the friendly chef at the Bell Hotel in Newtown, who arrived unexpectantly early to cook our pre-rally breakfast. Hearing the unmistakable sounds of a mega fry-up emanating

from the kitchen, I poked my head round the door and asked if it was possible to have a boiled egg.

"Are you the reporter?" he asked in beguilingly lilting Welsh tones. When his suspicions were confirmed, he threw his head back in an alarmingly gleeful manner, then collapsed in uncontrollable laughter at the apparent thought of a total newcomer to rallying on the cusp of imminent terror. His merriment may have been sharpened by the sight of me dressed in such crutch-drooping fireproof overalls, borrowed from Ron Hall, that I looked like Andy Pandy on a bad day.

From a co-driver's point of view, though, rallying is not half as terrifying — as you might think, but requires far more intense concentration than you may imagine. Navigating the road sections, where drivers must obey the Highway Code, is relatively straightforward once you have mastered the art of measuring the distance between given landmarks or road turnings, and not by using a conventional road map. You must also take charge of all-important time-cards, which are marked and checked by a myriad marshals en route.

There is an odometer the size of a taxi meter on the co-driver's side in rally cars and the guide to the course which you are given on the eve of a rally tells you the distance to the nearest tenth of a mile between say a T-junction and a small turning off to a forest

which you must take. There are also road signs, both in the route guide and of course on the road itself to help.

Off-road navigating, however, is a nightmare to the uninitiated, and most co-drivers spend years perfecting their art. Rowan Prentice — no relation and a paragon of generosity when it came to giving help and advice to a novice — came first as co-driver in last year's Mid-Wales historic rally and overall third last weekend in a Porsche 911 driven by Dave Prescoe. "He was my co-driver at a rally in Finland," says Hall, "and even though neither of us had ever seen the course before, he predicted every bend in the road, every dip, it was uncanny. He is one of the best, but it takes years to get like that."

Off-road navigating is so testing because of the speed — often touching 80-100mph — the lack of road signs, and the bewildering multiplicity of twists and turns, dips and hollows on forest tracks, most of which don't even merit a mention on a sketch you are given of the off-road sections. You are also given distances between key points, but it is very difficult as a learner to keep track.

Wales has the reputation of being the home of rallying, because its large tracts of forest, hills and mountains make it ideal terrain for off-road sections. While modern rallying is said to have its fair share of bitchiness, historic rallies are said to be havens of friendliness. And don't be deceived by the term "historic" — these vehicles are often highly tuned thoroughbreds.

They certainly keep a welcome in the hillsides at Newtown and District Automobile Club, which organised last weekend's Mid-Wales event. Everyone was at pains to explain to the eager but ignorant newcomer the perplexities of noise tests and scrutineering whereby officials check out the cars before they are allowed to take part.

"Some youngsters can't afford the fireproof suits, so one of them buys one and others borrow it just for the scrutineering," one official said. "Short of taking them by the scruff of the neck and checking their label afterwards, there's not a lot we can do."

While awaiting our own going over in the scrutineer's shed, Stephen Hall ponders the recklessness of some rally-entrants who fail to put roll bars in all the appropriate places on their cars. "You don't have to have them all," he says. "But anyone who doesn't needs his brains looking at" — a phrase which conjures visions of heads wrapped round trees in my pre-rally nervousness.

Actually, I was far more

Continued on page 2



Tens of thousands of people take part in rallies every year, 70 per cent in local events



On the starting grid, above, and the Vauxhall Nova GTE of Andrew Hockridge and Paul Williams, both from Rhyl, after it missed hitting a tree by an inch

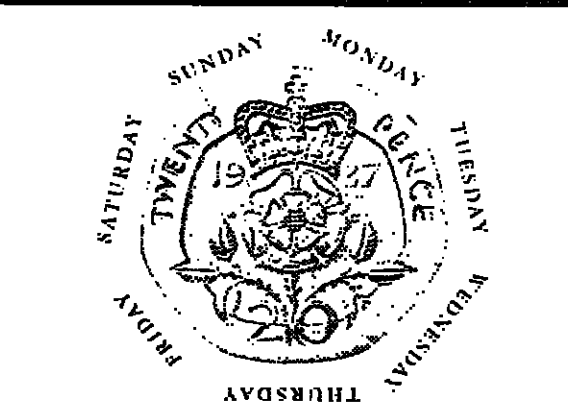


GOODWOOD FESTIVAL OF SPEED

■ TODAY Car 97 offers three women readers a unique opportunity to become co-drivers for a day to stars of the rally world. They will ride with Andrea Hall, Jane Gunningham and Janie Eaton on the tough rally stage, at the Goodwood Festival of Speed next month. Details are on Page 2.

■ THE rally stage is part of the biggest and best Festival of Speed yet. Among a spectacular array of historic cars and legendary drivers, Stirling Moss and Tony Brooks will drive 1950s Vauxwells. There is an off-road course, a Brooklands Paddock and a display to mark Ferrari's 50th birthday sponsored by The Times Box office: 01243-787766.

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Off-road navigating is a nightmare to the uninitiated and co-drivers spend years mastering it

IT'S BUILT ALONG THE SAME LINES AS OUR BIG ESTATES.
BUT WITHOUT ALL THE STRAIGHT LINES.

Flooding can catch us out, yet there are large numbers of drivers who plough through water as if taking part in the Cowes-Torbay powerboat race

Dangerous when wet, remember

King George III is supposed to have said that the English summer consists of three fine days and a thunderstorm, but nearly all of our nooks and crannies have discovered this month that he understated the thunderstorms, even if he was not far adrift on the fine days.

One evening this week, on a trunk road in the West Country, my car started performing like a speedboat, throwing out a great bow wave as I travelled for some three miles in what must have been close to four inches of water. Hang on, I had better revise that thought: my car would have behaved like a speedboat had I been driving like some people around me.

Before you accuse me of being sanctimonious, I should make it

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION



Peter Barnard

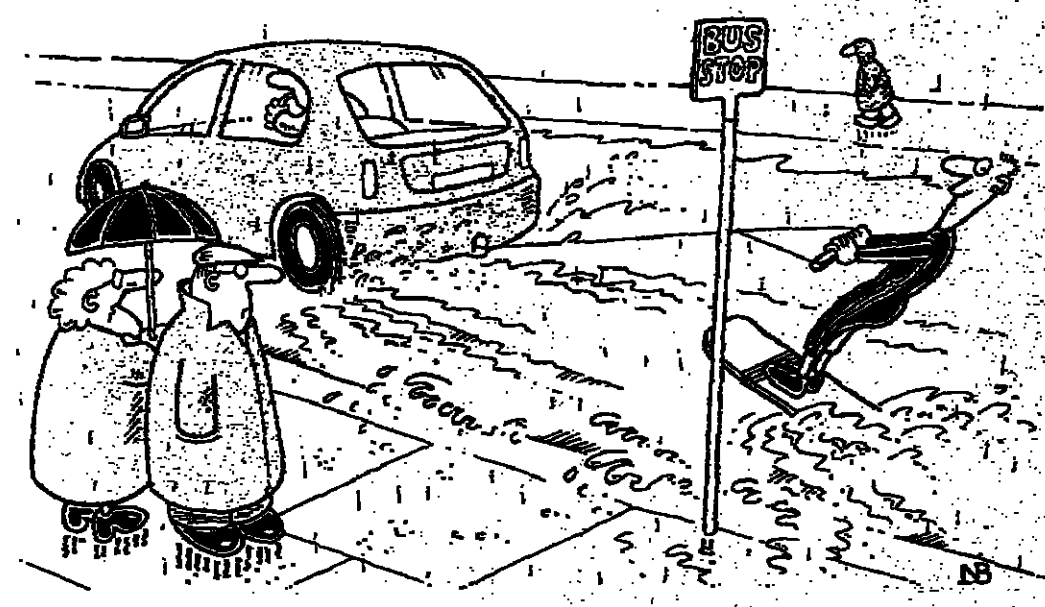
clear that I drive slowly in such conditions out of a desire for self-preservation and, yes, a degree of consideration for others. So what on earth are some of the wipers I have seen and heard about this week playing at?

In Warwickshire a man drove a

car down the flooded main street of a village in such a way that the resultant wall of water swept a woman and her toddler off their feet and dumped them in a shop doorway, mercifully unhurt.

That driver did not get his due desserts but another, elsewhere, did. This one soaked two police officers who had gone to the aid of a stranded motorist. The road in question was flooded for nearly a mile, yet still the driver was travelling at more than 50mph.

We have all been in situations where unexpected and very localised flooding catches us out, and it is particularly difficult to avoid these pools at night. Recent downpours have not been in that category, yet there are large numbers of drivers who plough through water as if taking part in the Cowes-Torbay powerboat race.



During my own aforementioned drive through the floods, I was reduced to about 25mph by a combination of the water underneath me and hailstones the size of pebbles that were restricting my forward view. This speed was not good enough for a chap behind, who overtook and sent a wave of

water crashing against the side of my car. As he pulled in front, he made an exaggerated show of raising his left wrist. Oh I see, the time. He had to drive like an idiot because he was in a hurry. A mile down the road I had the satisfaction of seeing his car parked on the verge, the driver gazing thoughtfully at his bonnet. I expect he was wondering whether to call the AA or the RNLI.

I find it extraordinary that in a country on the same latitude as Labrador we appear not to know how to drive in bad weather. But the answer to this puzzle lies in our friend's gesture towards his watch.

There is plenty of research showing that with the coming of motorways, we have a fixed idea as to how long a journey should take. Delays caused by weather, accidents or whatever do not alter that perception: we merely increase speed to compensate for the delay.

Most journeys we make we have undertaken before. Each has acquired an optimum time, which is to say, the quickest time we have ever taken. Therefore a journey we did once in two hours late at night on a weekday becomes, by hook or by crook, a two-hour journey, even if we make it on the evening before the start of a Bank Holiday weekend. If you are spending this Bank Holiday weekend away, you and I know that the journey home will take longer than we think.

Which in turn means that if we arrive home on Monday night at the time we hoped to arrive, somewhere along the way we will have taken a risk, exceeded the speed limit, made a dodgy overtaking manoeuvre, run a couple of amber lights or some such.

Well, none of us is perfect, but please, keep the speed down in the wet. One of the most interesting and least believed of statistics is that, in most years, more people drown in cars than in boats.

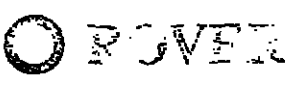
A deal that customers can bank on

BMW has put up £8bn to boost Rover sales. Vaughan Freeman explains

German car giant BMW is backing a new Rover "bank" to the tune of more than £8 billion. Customers do not even have to buy a Rover to cash in, since anyone looking to finance their car through Rover can drive off in cars built by rival manufacturers.

The move, announced in London this week, is the latest stage of the ever-closer working relationship between the motor manufacturers since BMW bought Rover three years ago.

BMW has repeatedly stressed there are no plans for Rover-badged cars simply to become bargain-basement BMWs, and BMW chairman Bernd Pischetsrieder says pre-



serving the "Englishness" of the badge with individual Rover designs is crucial.

However, the latest business link is the clearest sign yet that BMW, pledged to invest

that the new Rover Corporate Finance arm has been created to tap.

Last year Rover sold a total of 230,000 cars in Britain, around 90,000 of which went to corporate fleets. Convincing even a fraction of those customers to finance their fleets through Rover's new finance arm, rather than rival banks or credit institutions, would go a long way to putting the once ailing UK-based car-maker back in the black.

As well as offering finance to fleet managers who might regularly be in charge of buying as many as 5,000 cars a year, Rover Corporate Fi-

nance will also offer a full range of back-up services, including fleet maintenance and management, as well as advice dealing with tax and legal problems.

Rover Group chairman Walter Hasselkus, a member of the BMW Board, said: "Rover Corporate Finance will provide a full range of services from contract hire and contract purchase to finance leasing, fleet management and full outsourcing."

"Without the backing of BMW and BMW Finance, it would not have been possible for Rover to offer such a wide range of services at such a

competitive level to the benefit of the customer.

"When BMW acquired Rover in March 1994, there were many synergies in people's minds, areas where the



two companies could work together for mutual benefit. But I think it is true to say that the opportunities we actually have realised have exceeded those expectations.

"I would like to think that in a few years' time the Harvard Business School will use us as

a case study of a successful business acquisition."

Already, closer links between Rover and BMW were saving millions of pounds a year, said Hasselkus, because of the savings possible in greater bulk buying of components and parts. The two firms were also busy sharing ideas with Rover engineers now living and working in Bavaria, and German designers working at Rover's British plants.

He said that while BMW and Rover cars could share unseen bits and pieces "under the skin", such as electronic components and gearboxes, thus saving money in buying parts, the individual identities of the two makes would be not just protected but encouraged.

Wales in a blur of speed

Continued from page 1

worried about letting the side down by scuppering Hall's chances, than about crashing. There were twinges, however, when I learnt that you must write your blood group clearly on your overalls or helmet.

And in the five-second countdown before the first off-road stage, as the TR4 pawed at the earth in eager anticipation, I felt like a rodeo-rider before the corral gate is opened.

After the event, jubilant with my ill-deserved plaque on polished Welsh slate, I asked the RAC Motor Sports Association what exactly first in class meant. "Each club can decide their own classes," said spokesman Colin Wilson, adding with a deflationary gleam: "They could have cars with green wheels and black wind-screens... or only those cars with Times journalists on their first rally." As it happens, our class was for cars manufactured in 1964.

But, in the final analysis, did the earth move for me? It certainly did, the only problem was keeping track of it for navigation purposes.

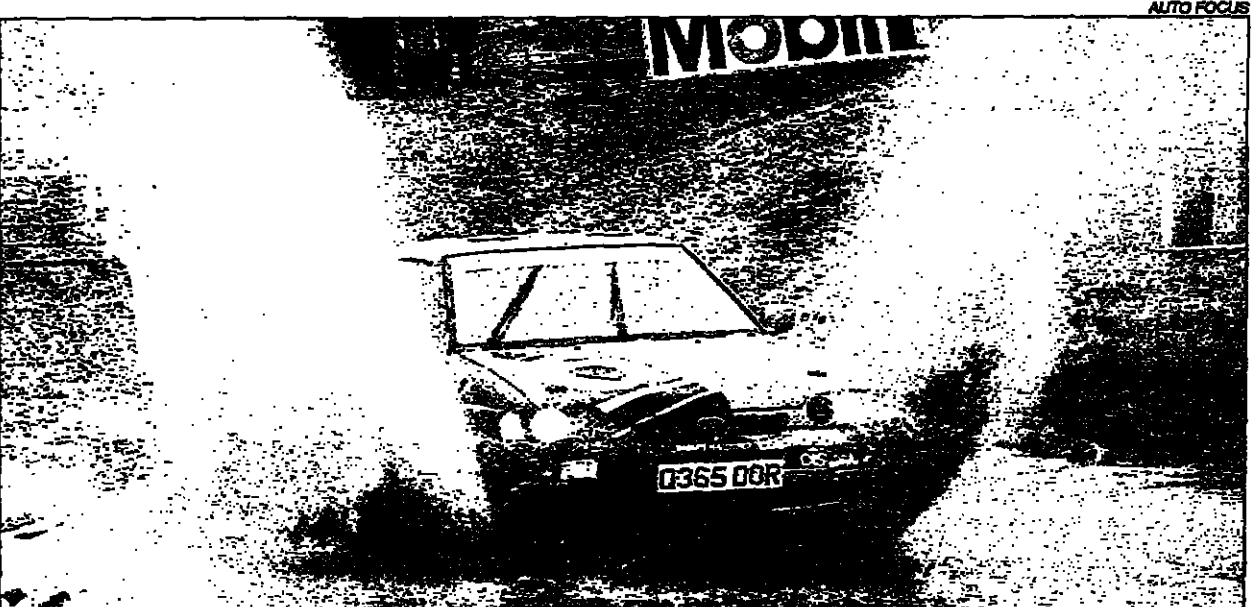
For information about rallies in Britain, write to The RAC Motor Sports Association, Motor Sports House, Riverside Park, Colnbrook, Slough SL2 0UH.

■ **TO ENTER** many rallies you need a £26 competition licence and be a member of a club, which costs around £28 a year.

■ **STEPHEN** Hall's TR4 is top of the range in historic rallying terms and worth around £40,000, while the cheapest cars cost £5,000-£6,000. Hall usually spends between £200 and £400 restoring his vehicle after every event. This is in part alone, since he owns his own specialist TR company.

■ **YOU** must have a helmet from £65 to £500 or more, and fireproof overalls, from £200 to "silly money for designer kit" according to Hall.

■ **UNLESS** you already know your blood group, which must be displayed on helmet or overalls, you may have to spend around £20 for a private blood test.



An Escort Cosworth entered by the Ordnance Survey, the latest name among sponsors of the Festival of Speed

Stars rallying to the course

Eve-Ann Prentice looks forward to Goodwood's Festival of Speed

Visit the Festival of Speed at Goodwood next month, and you could end up seeing stars... the top names in British rallying, that is.

While historic cars of every description tackle the Tarmac hill climb course, Britain's leading rally drivers will try to beat the clock over a purpose-made loose surface rally stage. Ten official car manufacturers' teams and 20 other major rally competitors will have five attempts at the stage, which involves two laps of a half-mile course outside Moleculm Corner on Saturday and Sunday June 21 and 22.

The cream of British rallying will churn up the ground at the Goodwood Rally Sprint, including Alister McRae, younger brother of former World Rally Champion Colin McRae, and Gwyndaf Evans, who won the British Rally Championship for Ford last year.

Evans has already set about

defending his championship title and proving the pace of the Escort Super Rally Car. Alister McRae, meanwhile, is back after a year's sabbatical, and is spearheading Volkswagen's Sony-sponsored 1997 championship bid which he currently leads.

The Ladies' class contest will be between four of the toughest women in the sport: Barbara Armstrong, full-time rally instructor Andrea Hall, Janie Eaton, and Jane Cunningham — all with four-wheel drive at their disposal in what is expected to be a fiercely-fought battle of wit, grit and speed. On the Sunday, three female *Times* readers will act as co-drivers to the women (see right).

Armstrong is in her first season as works driver for Seat after spending several seasons in the Peugeot Challenge rally series and was second female finisher on last year's RAC Rally.

Although teamwork be-



Armstrong, debut for Seat

tween driver and co-driver is usually crucial in rallying, the Goodwood course is so short that the winners of our competition to go with the Ladies' Class entrants will provide nothing more than ballast and can afford to enjoy the ride.

Drivers who will let rip and roar their way round the rally course will also include Peugeot works driver and 1996 British Junior Rally Champion, Justin Dale, and Robbie Head and Marian Rowe for Renault.

Even seasoned rally-enthus-

asts can be confused by the array of classes in the sport and the Goodwood Rally Sprint enters wholeheartedly into this spirit of bewilderment. There are five classes. Formula 2 and Formula 2 Kit cars are based on mass production front-wheel drive saloons with non-turbo engines, with the kit versions endowed with more power and bodywork modifications.

Cars in Class N (which stands for *normale*) are allowed to make only very limited modifications and the class tends to attract four-wheel drive, turbo-charged performance versions of mass production saloons.

In Group A, power output is restricted to a relatively paltry 300bhp and most cars in this class have sophisticated six-or-more-speed gearboxes, massive brakes, traction control and extensive bodywork modifications.

Open, or O Class, cars are usually seen where the drivers are paying their own way and just about anything goes as long as it is safe for crew and spectators. The last of the five is the Ladies, or L Class.

Become a fast woman

FEMALE readers with an appetite for excitement can win the thrill of riding as co-drivers with three of Britain's top women rally-drivers at the Goodwood Rally Sprint.

Fast rides are up for grabs on Sunday, June 22 with Andrea Hall in the fearsome Audi quattro S2, Jane Cunningham in her striking Subaru Impreza and Janie Eaton with the sun-footed Ford Escort Cosworth.

Eve-Ann Prentice of *The Times* will ride shotgun with works Seat team driver, Barbara Armstrong in her Seat Ibiza GTi.

Although the rally sprint course is only a mile in length, which should take just over a minute to complete, the three women readers of *The Times* who win our competition will get five runs at it during the day and do their bit in helping the drivers compete for the Ladies' Prize.

And the beauty of this contest is there are no maps to read or paper-work to complete. All you have to do is sit tight and enjoy the ride, reassured by the knowledge that all the cars are equipped with full roll cages, rally seats and full harness seat belts.

To win the chance to ride with the best in British rallying, answer the following questions:

1 - What is the name of the only woman rally driver ever to have won a round of the World Rally Championship?

2 - What model of car will be used in the Goodwood Rally Sprint by the Seat works rally team?

Send your answers on a postcard to Rally Competition, Intercom Network, 29 The High Street, Marlow, Bucks, SL7 1AU.

The winners will be the first three correct answers drawn after the closing date of next Saturday, May 31. Normal *Times* competition rules apply.



AUTOFAX by David Long and Les Evans

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What size people can you actually fit in a people mover? We went to both extremes to check it out



Sitting comfortably: heavyweights of the London Broncos Rugby League team at ease in a Hijet, Britain's smallest people carrier, and seven children — plus attendant adults — in the nine aircraft-style seats of a Ford Tourneo

Room inside for ten Broncos . . .

It is controversial advertising claims that it picks up five times more women than a Lamborghini, but I went much better in the Daihatsu Hijet, the smallest people carrier on sale in Britain — I picked up ten members of the London Broncos Rugby League team.

Five of them, all taller than the upright vehicle, squeezed into the front two rows of seats and, with the third one folded down, another five jumped into the back. Even Mick Seaby, the bad boy of the Broncos, who gave away two vital penalties at St Helens a week ago, climbed into the front passenger seat without a murmur of complaint or any discomfort. At 6ft 8ins and 21 stone, he did, however, find difficulty in getting into any of the other seats and settled for sitting in the sliding doorway leading to the middle row.

After persuading him down, we were ready for a trial run with Robbie Beazley, the hooker, and a meagre 13-and-a-half stone, at the wheel and Seaby and fellow giant and record try scorer Scott Roskel standing by to push. Their efforts were not required. Even with this

Tony Dawe joins the pack in a Daihatsu Hijet

weight aboard and boasting only a 999cc engine, the Hijet gullied away easily. It is billed as a six-seater, but the purpose of our exercise was to show that this little 'un could cope with plenty of big 'uns.

Daihatsu argues that many people carriers are used principally for day-to-day journeys in town and that larger vehicles are unnecessary. Its rivals, such as the Renault Espace and Ford Galaxy, might carry one or two more people in greater comfort, but cost several thousand pounds more than the Hijet's on the road price of £8,795.

The Hijet seemed to be at its happiest with a heavy load as I had discovered, on a wine collection trip to France the day before meeting the Broncos. Heading for Dover empty, the machine swayed unsteadily along the M2 and needed cooing across the Medway bridge in a rainstorm. In Calais, it rattled and lurched

unceremoniously over the railway tracks and cobbles which greet drivers taking the short cut into the town centre. After 20 cases had been loaded, however, the vehicle settled down and returned me to Calais, late as usual, at a comfortable gallop.

Loading the wine — and boxes of toys for a school fair on another occasion — was extremely simple. To convert the Hijet from a six-seater to a four simply involved removing the headrests from the back row, unlatching the seats and folding them upright behind the second row.

My overall impressions were mixed. I enjoyed the excellent vision from the high driving position and found the gearbox smooth and simple. I was irritated however by a petrol gauge that wandered when the tank was between a quarter full and empty, and by radio controls somewhere near my left ankle.

In London, the narrowness of the Hijet allowed it to reach parts other people carriers could not. I nipped into narrow lanes at traffic lights and on two-lane roads could squeeze past on the inside of vehicles which had stopped to turn right.

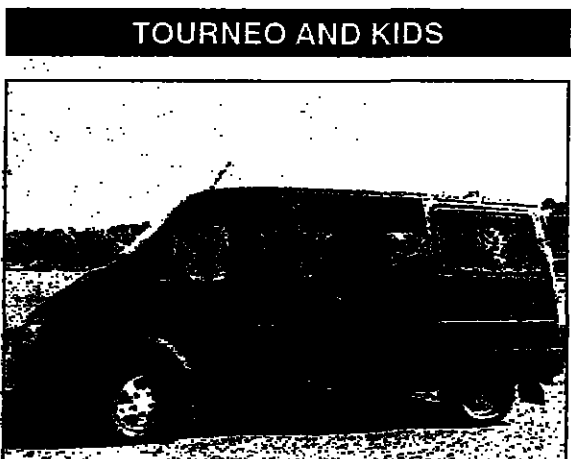
The authorities in London have however done their best to queer the Hijet's chances in the capital by introducing traffic calming at every opportunity. The Hijet did not like road humps and they had to be treated with great respect at a very slow speed. Road cushions which some councils now favour were impossible.

The vehicle's wheel base was too narrow to pass slowly along the sides of these obstacles, forcing the driver to jolt the passengers on one side up in the air while the others had a smoother ride. After passing a dozen of these obstacles in Nightingale Lane, Balham, South London, all my passengers wanted to get out. Mind you, the Broncos might have preferred to carry the Hijet over the bumps.



Daihatsu Hijet, multi-purpose vehicle
Engine: 47bhp. Height: 6ft 1½ in. Width: 4ft 7in.
Length: 10ft 9in. Weight: 240 stone.
Maximum speed: 90 miles an hour.
Suspension: MacPherson strut at front, rigid rear axle, double-acting telescopic shock absorbers.
Fuel consumption: 37.7mpg in town, 44.1 at constant 56mpg.
Price: £8,795.

Mick Seaby, front row forward
Engine: Unmeasurable. Height: 6ft 8in. Width: 4ft 8in (chest size). Length: Not applicable. Weight: 21 stone.
Maximum speed: 12 miles an hour.
Suspension: Two legs like tree trunks.
Fuel consumption: Large steak and six eggs a day, plus undisclosed number of pints of Fosters.



Engine: Two-litre petrol producing 115bhp at 5,500rpm driving rear wheels through five-speed manual gearbox.
Height: 7ft 4ins. **Width:** 6ft 6ins. **Length:** 15ft 4ins.
Performance: Top speed 85-90mph, 0-60mph n/a.
Economy: 25-30mpg.
Price: £19,400.

Verdict: Eight-year old Emily Freeman's favoured form of transport is a friendly pony called Drummer Boy, while her six-year-old brother, Ben, prefers his mountain bike. Carly, eight, and her five-year-old sister Sophie Radford, and neighbour Sophie Carney, also eight, prefer high-speed running (aided by a skipping rope where allowed) and cycling, while 10-year-old Charlie Carney grabs a parental piggy-back whenever possible.

. . . and space for the Seven Dwarfs

The Seven Dwarfs' test might not be a recognised benchmark among manufacturers obsessed with speed or chic looks, but it should be. For motorists who regularly have to transport large numbers of their own children, their children's schoolmates, relatives, cuddly toys, bicycles and luggage, the Dwarfs' test is the single most important factor in choosing a car.

Simply, the vehicle must be able to seat seven youngsters — and an adult or two — safely and comfortably, with enough seat belts to go round and enough space left over to cope with the never-ending trips to school, scout camps, weekend football matches and the family holiday.

Few cars, even the longest estates, are up to the challenge. The rash of people movers now on the market can sometimes seat eight or nine, but only if the passengers leave their luggage behind.

There is, though, a little known secret solution to the dilemma, hidden away in the Ford line-up, overshadowed by its ritzier and more expensive Galaxy cousin, an alternative that is bigger, roomier and far better suited to the job in almost every respect.

The bizarrely-named Ford Tourneo is at heart a Transit van, but don't let that put you off. The Transit has been around for more than 30 years, more than three million have been sold, and it is as robust and honest a vehicle as you will find.

Ford has taken the Transit to the beauty salon and given it the full plastic surgery job to turn it into the Tourneo. There are up to nine aircraft-style seats, carpeting, yards of seat belts, airbags and air-conditioning, and enough luggage space left over to resolve the Seven Dwarfs conundrum.

At the wheel, the Tourneo is much more car than van, because Ford has fitted it with the instruments and gearbox from their Car of the Year Mondeo, so that cup-holders, cubby holes, pencil tray, even a map-cum-clipboard holder,

This is child's play, Vaughan Freeman reports

all feature. The five-speed manual gearbox is matched to a light clutch, although the van-ish long gearstick takes some getting used to. There is an automatic version on the turbodiesel Tourneo.

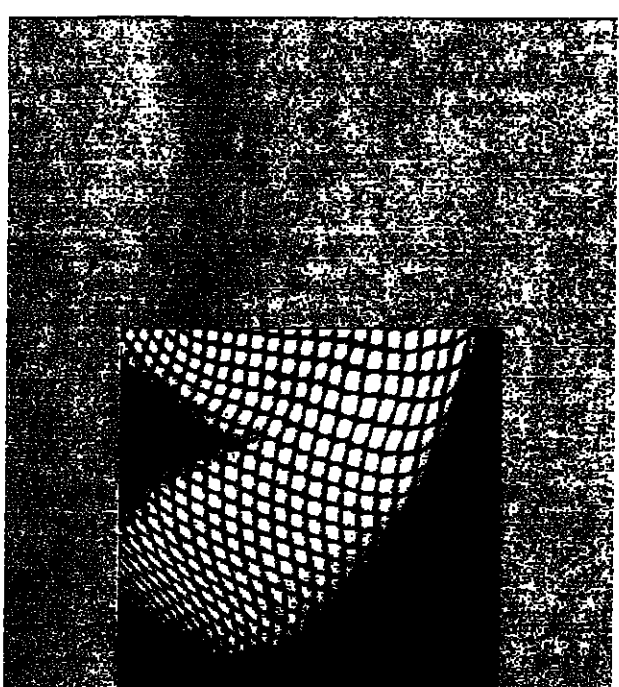
Power steering and anti-lock braking add to the car-like feel, although the van-derived advantages are obvious. You sit head and shoulders above the traffic, able to see over cars parked too close to junctions and far down the road to where problems might be developing. There are also van-derived drawbacks. The steering wheel feels too big, the turning circle is cumbersome, and the Tourneo was too tall for our local underground car park.

A huge sliding door on the left-hand side is great for rear passengers, and makes it easy getting in and out, even when parked close to another vehicle. However, having just one door on the right-hand side, for the driver, proved highly irritating for those in the rear.

The Tourneo feels big, more van than car, and it takes time to adjust to, even though at 4.6 metres it is shorter than a Volvo V90 estate, Vauxhall Omega estate, Toyota Previa or the Ford Galaxy/Seat Alhambra. At motorway speeds road and engine noise, amplified by the box-shaped body, are much louder than from a modern saloon.

None of which seriously undermines the Tourneo's prowess as a people and luggage carrier. Even with all three rows of seats in place, there is plenty of luggage space for bags and/or prams, all made accessible by a barn-size door that lifts up and out of the way. With the rear row of three seats folded down, the luggage space assumes Albert Hall proportions.

Unlike the MPV, the Tourneo is based on three decades of development. Big, honest, capacious, for those fed-up with the frustrations and unfulfilled claims of other people movers, this fancy Transit could be the answer.



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Despite being taller than the vehicle, five Broncos fitted in the Hijet's front two rows of seats with the rest in the back

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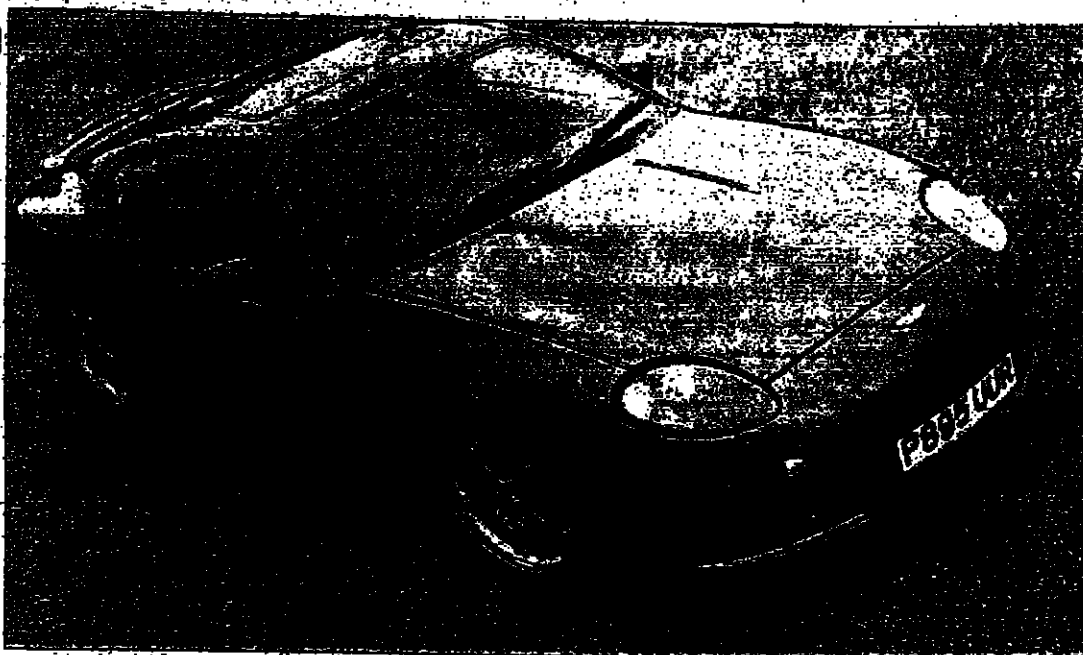
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Pitched as Europe's answer to Harley-Davidson, BMW's R1200C Cruiser

BMW 750, forging a bond with big business in the US



Poor old Bond misses Aston Martin's latest

Power, performance and British Racing Green paintwork were not enough: 007 will still drive a BMW when he returns to the screen, says Ian Morton

Here is the Aston Martin that James Bond could have been driving in his next cinematic adventure. If the film production company had been more mindful of the Englishness of the 007 tradition, instead of Bond's latest connection with the DB7, he would go back to Sean Connery in *Goldfinger* — will drive a large BMW saloon.

This powerful development of the elegant DB7 would have been available for the new Bond: epic, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, due out in December. The film-makers, Eon Productions, had not committed themselves to the German marque. Aston will launch it this summer to wealthy and discerning customers as a "performance enhancement".

Behind the new front treatment, is a muscular 400bhp version of the super-charged 3.2-litre, straight-six engine. It was developed for competition with a "gentlemen's race series" in mind — just the sort of weekend diversion in which James Bond might indulge between one international crime syndicate and the next.

And the car's performance would certainly give him the edge in any chase sequence — rocketing acceleration from 0-60mph in less than 4.6 seconds and a top speed of 125mph. Fast enough to beat the "rednecks" off anything from a hatchback.

Output of the standard engine has been boosted by almost 50 per cent. New engine management electronics, larger fuel injectors, high-lift camshaft, positive and modified exhaust, "Stabiliser" suspension and more powerful brakes to Aston's racing specification match the extra performance. Distinctive composite body panels, which can be declined, says Aston, the discreet owner does not wish to advertise the performance

improvements — will complete the uplift of the already snazzy DB7 to a serious new performance plateau.

Serious motor racing money will be involved too — the exercise is likely to push the standard £82,500 price of the latest model some way into the six-figure bracket. A man's car at a man's price — so how could the film men remain immune?

If they had said yes, it would have been on the film screen for seconds flat, says Aston spokesman Harry Calton. "Outlines had seen that British Racing Green paintwork had been that exhaust pipe, they would have known they had done the right thing."

But it seems that when the

film company elected to give Pierce Brosnan, a just-out BMW Z3 roadster instead of the equally new DB7 in the last 007 saga, *Goldeneye*, an option on further association with the German marque was part of the deal.

And when *Tomorrow Never Dies* hits the screens around

the end of the year, Brosnan will not only be driving a BMW 750 V12 but will also throw a leg over the latest BMW motorcycle, the R1200C Cruiser, a big new chopper-style flatwin bike due out in September, which BMW believes will be the European answer to Harley-Davidson.

The Bond team's love affair with BMW has grown out of the German company's decision to source the Z3 in South Carolina to give prime service to the sun-drenched and sportscar-crazy US market. Product placement — getting commercial goods displayed in films — is big business, and

especially important in the US. A department within BMW's American operation is devoted to winning media exposure, admits spokesman Chris Willows.

At the time of the *Goldeneye* launch in December 1995, reports suggested that a mutual marketing agreement worth

£17 million had been drawn up between BMW and Eon Productions. Eon describes the figure as "grossly inflated", and BMW insists that no cash changed hands.

"There are company rules and regulations, and Rule One is that we do not pay," says Willows. "Rule Two is that we will co-operate only when the character with whom the car is to be associated is a goodie, or at least a likeable rogue."

"The Z3 and the *Goldeneye* film were being launched at the same time, and co-operation fulfilled the needs of both us and the film company. And anyway there has been a big swing in the Bond character — today he is a more accessible Bond, a more European Bond."

In *Goldeneye* he drove a £19,950 car which was going to be within reach of a large group of buyers.

So did Aston make an approach for a role for the DB7 "gentleman's racer" in *Tomorrow Never Dies*? "There was some discussion," says Calton, "but there seems to have been a prior commitment. After all, BMW has a manufacturing plant and a large dealer network in the US. Of course, we think it is a pity. For all the cars that have appeared in Bond films — the Mitsubishi sports car, the underwater Lotus, the Citroën 2CV, even the Aston Vantage on skis — it is the DB5 that people always remember."

"But we are making a silver DB5 available this time. We understand that it may be parked strategically in at least one scene."

And was there a third contender? There have been reports that Jaguar made approaches to get Brosnan into the XK8 in "Bond 18", as the next film is known in the business. Jaguar denies this.

"We understand that there was no contest here because an arrangement with BMW for a second film was a foregone conclusion," says Jaguar's David Crisp. "We heard BMW was disappointed by the small exposure for its Z3 in *Goldeneye*, and that a runoff into a second film was agreed."

"But we are involved in discussions with author Raymond Benson, who has been commissioned by the Fleming estate to write the next Bond book. We have sent him specifications of the XK8 and he is considering putting Bond in the car."

"Of course it's not automatic that a film script follows the book, but we do hope it is possible that James Bond will drive the XK8 somewhere in the future."



The new DB7 in racing livery: developed for competition with a "gentlemen's race series" in mind — just the sort of weekend diversion in which James Bond might indulge

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Buy a perfectly good Mercedes E320 Avantgarde with a typical bundle of extras for nearly £45,000, then spend another £31,000 with a firm that turns it into a car at which Mercedes itself looks down its corporate nose?

When money is no object and individuality is the objective, it happens. At this level, top dealers and manufacturers are happy to discuss special livery and equipment on your next Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Aston Martin or Daimler, writes Ian Morton.

If you want something special on a Merc, the makers invite you to consult AMG, the engineering and bodywork modifier which they officially embrace, but here comes a maverick alternative, the German-born firm Brabus, back in Britain after a period of absence, with a base in Kent and six regional centres to bring their services to Merc buyers across the nation.

Mercedes says that any engineering modification invalidates the relevant bit of its warranty, but Brabus undertakes to refill any gaps. And the firm is at pains to accord to the original the respect it

deserves. Exterior changes "are aerodynamically designed to enhance the visual appearance of a Mercedes-Benz while being sympathetic to the original design concept", says the blurb. Refinements are created as "an integral part of the car".

The £76,000 E 3.6 conversion of the E320 Avantgarde bears out the claim. Much has happened to the car, but it is no swankwagen. Salient wheel arches brimfull of dramatic 18-inch alloy wheels tapped in ultra-low profile Dunlop rubber with an 8.5-inch wide footprint look absolutely right. Front and rear spoilers and side skirts discreetly follow natural E-Class lines, fit and finish are impeccable. Teutonic standards are palpably maintained.

The Brabus name alone adorns bootlid and wheels, and "B" emblems replace the triple star front and rear — perhaps that is the touch which really peevs Mercedes. Inside, new roused leather and an extra touch of

softness in the seat surfaces are entirely fitting.

Conversion of the straight-six 3.2-litre 220bhp unit into a 3.6 delivering 285bhp produces a hefty serving of extra performance, with steep initial torque and a flatter curve thereafter. In the five-speed automatic test car I did 0-30mph in 2.5 seconds and 0-60 in 5.8, both a long blink less than the E320, while the Brabus-quoted maximum of around 160mph is some 20mph higher.

But the urban calm and simmering cruise of the standard product are not impaired. Rather the opposite. My car gentled along the autobahn at 70mph for 2400rpm, with only the song of the treads for company, yet hauled to 100mph on kickdown within seven seconds, turning the opposition into retreating dots. The engine note never became more than excited even when firing in second gear all the way to the 6400rpm redline and 65mph, or when exceeding 100mph in third.

The chassis communicated the same message. The modified suspension involved little extra business at low speeds, even with those broad tyres, and the harder the car was driven, the rounder the ride. It begged to punch through the B-roads, the steering more communicative at higher speeds, the ride less juggy the faster it consumed the bumps, the structure ever solid and level. The more demanding the driver, the more focused and compact the car's behaviour.

Despite all this controlled muscularity, overall consumption of 29.3mpg was no heavier than that expected of an E320, and seemingly lighter on a long leisurely run. The 3.6 is just one example of Brabus wizardry. The firm will gently massage a C-Class 1.8 to give 136bhp, for instance, while their mightiest product, the 7.3-litre EV1 2, delivers 582bhp, 0-124mph in 15 seconds and almost 190mph — the fastest four-door saloon in the world. And if you need to know how much, as the saying goes, you will not be able to afford it.



Mercedes E320 Avantgarde, Brabus version: if you have to ask how much, you can't afford it

CAR...TOONS



How road bikes have passed the safety test

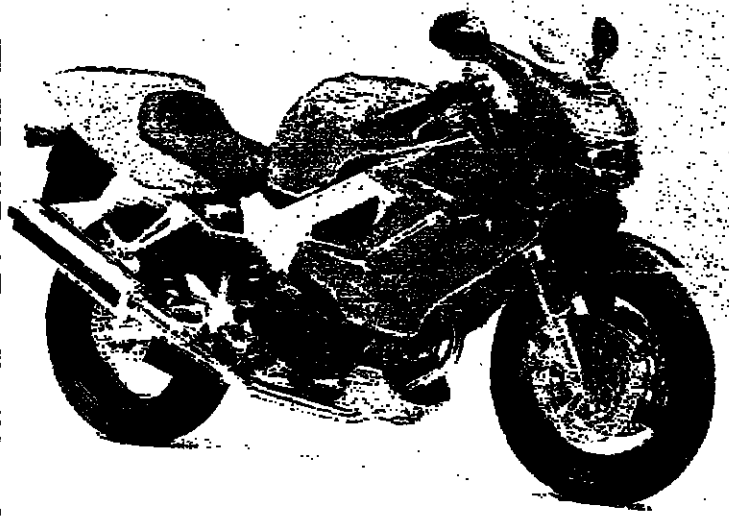
After its return from a tragically last year, the Production TT is back on June 6, basking in its status as one of the most popular events of the island's speed festival. Road bikes are once more able to race round the twists, turns, jumps and bumps of the world's most demanding road racing circuit.

The event was dropped after three-time TT winner Phil Mellor and Steve Henshaw were killed in the original 1300cc Production class race in 1989, with the predictable reaction that road bikes were too dangerous for the TT. So what has changed to make them "safe" to race again? The bikes themselves, according to supporters of the event, following last year's disaster-free re-launch which vindicated their faith in the safety of modern motorcycles.

When Mellor and Henshaw died — at Doran's Bend and Quarry Bends — many were quick to contend that road bikes of the day were unable to handle the fearsome bumps and frighteningly high corner speeds on the historic 37.75 mile circuit. Now, say manufacturers, bikes have been sufficiently refined and developed. In response to the continuing demand for race replica machines at the showrooms, to meet the TT challenge.

One of the leading lights behind reviving the event is Honda UK's general manager Bob McMillan, who claims the race has proved a success for manufacturers, dealers and customers alike: "The Production TT has really awakened interest among our dealers and their customers. It has become a spectacle where

**Paul Myles on
the return of
production
machines after
death put them
out of the TT**



Honda's Fireblade, above, snatched back the title of Britain's top-selling bike after winning the 1996 Production TT. This year it is joined by the V-twin 1000cc Firestorm

third biggest prize money purse of the TT festival. Road riding race enthusiasts also want to see bikes very similar to their own pushed to the limit by the stars.

Eight-time TT winner and victor in last year's Production TT, Phillip McCallen, said racers are happy on the modern road bikes: "There is very little difference in the handling on a road circuit like the Isle of Man between the Fireblade I ride and my works' 750. Modern bikes are much safer than the old proddie bikes, which had the speed but did not handle well.

"I think the fans like to see their own bikes being ridden at speed and the bike that wins the TT is really the best road bike in the world."

Indeed, many modern race replica bikes I have ridden are so close to emulating their race track cousins that they are seriously compromised as day-to-day transport.

Good though these ma-

chines are, no-one could claim that any motor vehicle raced on the Isle of Man can do so in total safety. People can, and have, injured and killed themselves on antique racing bikes travelling at speeds a fraction of that achieved by modern machines. A grim tally of 168 TT competitors killed since the race began in 1907 is testimony to the dangers of the course.

Two deaths in practice last week, last year emphasise the potential for disaster. Yorkshire's Mick Lofthouse died on his full race, Yamaha 250, while the Kiwi rider, Rob Holden, was killed on a production specification Ducati 916 Corsa. Both men had clocked the fastest class lap times before they died.

A racer will always push any racing vehicle to its limit. It just so happens that the Isle of Man is not a good place to fall off a motorcycle -- at any speed. Yet the TT remains the

greatest challenge a rider can face. That is why tens of thousands come back to this magical isle each year to pitch their riding skill against the *Mountain Course*.

A rider can experience a tremendous thrill when mastering a section, at speeds hitherto a mere ambition. That thrill must be many times greater for the racers who seem to be breaking new records every year.

But the riders' hand-in-hand with that challenge. So it would be foolish to expect TT racing to be completely safe. Many TT fans hope that race organisers will not, once more, wring their hands and scrap a race when something goes wrong as, in time, it surely will. For if one event is ditched, the argument to ditch the whole festival becomes more persuasive. That would deprive us all of the unique piece of heritage, some would say a national treasure, that the Isle of Man TT races have become.

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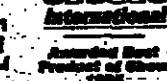
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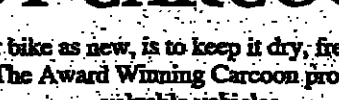
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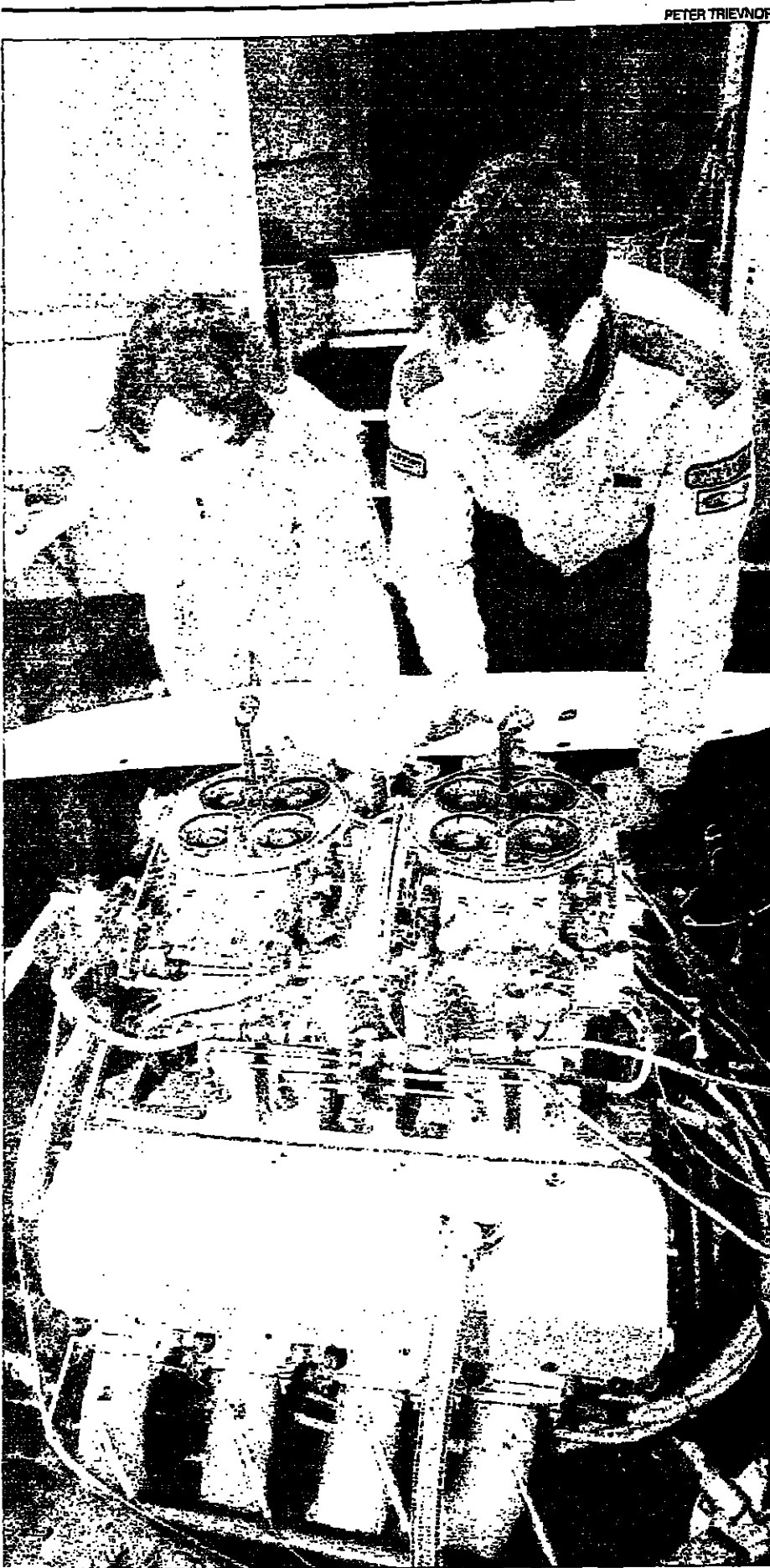
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Appleton shows Galloway what takes his Chev Camaro from 0 to 185mph in 7.5 seconds

'I accept his offer of a lift. All I have to do is hang on'

Linda Galloway discovers what it's like to leave the starting line with the force of a Space Shuttle

My car, which I admit is average (and over-age), accelerates from 0 to 70mph in... I don't know how long. But it's a long time. Gordon Appleton's Chev Camaro did 0 to 185mph in just 7.5 seconds — and would no doubt have been quicker without me in it.

OK, he has 11,000cc of power at his disposal, in an engine not unlike a life-support machine, all gleaming metal and precision-engineered pipes and valves which inject liquid nitromethane. It cost the equivalent of a small house and can drink a gallon of fuel in less than ten seconds over a quarter of a mile.

This is an accelerator with a chassis, very loud and very fast — on a runway it would leave a jumbo jet standing — and it's drawing the crowds as drag racing enjoys a revival along with the food, music and fashion of the 1970s.

This weekend the Santa Pod Raceway in Bedfordshire hosts the first round of the FIA European Professional Drag Racing Championship, in four classes: Top Fuel (the equivalent of Formula One), Top Alcohol, Pro-Modified and Pro-Stock (the touring-car class). There is also UK Championship racing and the ACU Bike Championships, in which modified street bikes, also using nitromethane injection, reach speeds in excess of 160mph.

In the Top Fuel and Top Alcohol dragster classes, women leave the competition standing. Sweden's Viveca Averstedt, in a 6,000bhp V8 dragster, holds the European FIA Championship title with 291mph in 5.03 seconds. She is



European FIA Championship holder Averstedt hopes to break the five-second barrier

hoping to break the five-second barrier on Monday. In the Top Alcohol class, Fay Fischer is Britain's fastest woman driver with a top speed of 210mph in 6.478 seconds.

The Pro-Stock dragsters are modified touring cars with about eight times more horsepower (and six times more neon paint). In the Top Fuel category, the nitromethane injection produces about 40 times the horsepower of the average street car.

Top-Fuel dragsters, which look like elongated go-karts, leave the starting line with a force nearly five times that of gravity, the same force as the Space Shuttle when it leaves the launch pad. The same force is applied in reverse when the twin parachutes open to stop the car. In 1 to 100mph trials, the Top Fuel cars are almost 11 seconds faster than a production Porsche 911 Turbo.

It's a non-stop action event, complete with smoke, the smell of burning tyres and deafening noise as the cars compete, two-by-two, from a standing start. The fastest over the distance stays on the starting grid in successive elimination rounds until only one car is left. Spectators can view the entire track from the stand and have access to the pits, where they can chat to drivers and crews and look at the cars. And if that's not enough, 12 times a year there are "Run what you Brung" events for enthusiasts with rubber to burn.

Racetrack owner Keith Bartlett, a former professional racing driver, would like to see drag racing in Europe achieve the mega-sport status it has in America. The track at Santa Pod has been upgraded with a special race-circuit sur-

face on which Formula One cars are tested. Bartlett's company has spent £400,000 so far, and hopes to get planning permission to upgrade the spartan and makeshift spectator facilities.

"We now have the track, the championship deal [with FIA supreme Bernie Ecclestone] and the drivers. The sponsors are coming back into the sport and we've got comprehensive television coverage," he says.

Leading the 200mph Pro-Modified Class in the UK, Gordon Appleton admits his high-speed habit. Like most junkies, he started small, with a speeding fine when he was 18. Now he seeks the six-second high, although he concedes the addiction costs more to support than any hard drug — the tyres, replaced every four miles, cost £600 a pair and the nitromethane (a form of laughing gas) is 30 times more expensive than petrol.



IF YOU want a taste of the immensely powerful sport of drag racing which is fast growing in popularity, then for today only, there is a two-for-one ticket offer for three readers who present this copy of Car 97 at the gate.

SANTA Pod Raceway is in Airfield Road, Pocklington, Bedfordshire. It is signposted on the A509 from junctions 14, 15 or 16 of the M1.

The meeting runs throughout the Bank Holiday weekend. Three-day tickets (£35) include free camping. One-day tickets are £10 (today), £15 (Sunday) and £18 (Monday).

TICKET and information hotline: 01294-782828.

Against my better judgment, I accept his offer of a lift to the other end of the track, reminded that my own speed record is 110mph while testing a 600cc motorbike on a private stretch of road. Strapped in and helmeted, under strict instruction not to touch anything, I survey the cockpit, stripped of all saloon-car faithfuls but with on-board computer and other levers and gadgets essential to low flying. When the lights on the starting grid change, Gordon must complete a series of split-second manoeuvres, guided by a sequence of lights. All I have to do is hang on.

After the track has been sprayed with sticky goo, we do a burnout — spinning the tyres in a pool of water and then a short-but stomach-churning drag to clean and prep them for better traction. Er, that was lovely, can I get out now, please? But no, with a nerve-shattering roar the revs climb to 4,000 (with plenty more to come) and I am forcefully pinned to the seat as we take off. The back tyres dig in, the front ones lift off the ground. I feel the back of the car slide out and then straighten up. And then we are there. The blink of an eye... mine are tightly shut.

An awesome ticket to ride

The tyres were spinning, the nitromethane burning off in a plume, the noise and vibration quite awesome

Gordon thought this should have been faster but after some rain, track conditions were not perfect

The half-way mark and the senses were overloaded

We crossed the finish line and experienced the exhilaration of moving at 185mph before being pushed back again by the force of braking

SANTA POD RACEWAY
RACETRACK, POCKLINGTON, BEDFORDSHIRE
For more info call 01294 782828

8.7 05-21 1997 123 36149

RACE NO. 1
MOTOR: 2000 PPM2

CLASS: 1
RACE NO. 1
MOTOR: 2000 PPM2

1. 1.100
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3. 1.100
4. 1.100
5. 1.100
6. 1.100
7. 1.100
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10. 1.100

SET FINISH
Timing by TSI SYSTEM 2000 PLUS

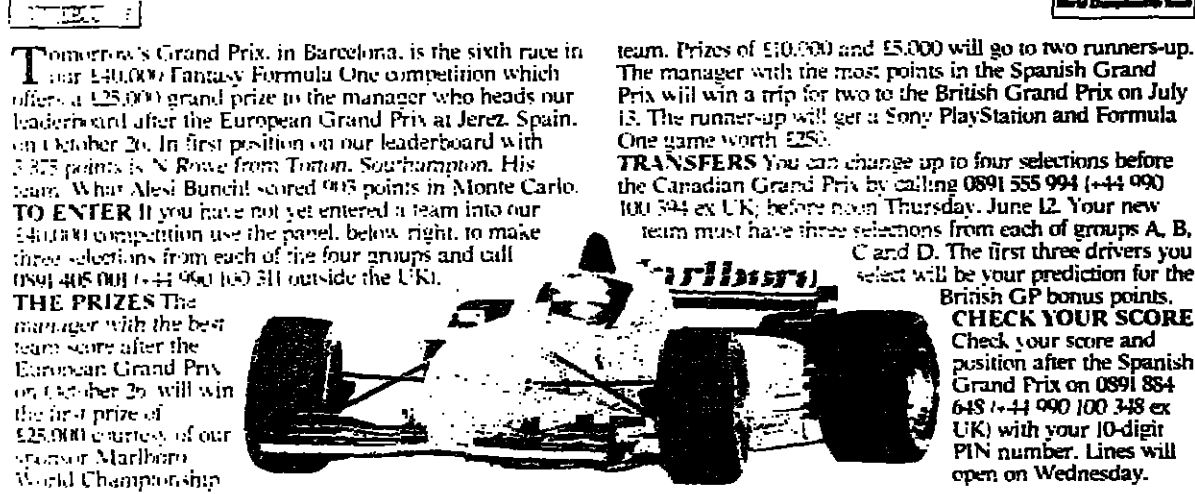
PLAY FANTASY FORMULA ONE

Prizes worth £40,000

Tomorrow's Grand Prix, in Barcelona, is the sixth race in our £40,000 Fantasy Formula One competition which offers a £25,000 grand prize to the manager who heads our leaderboard after the European Grand Prix at Jerez, Spain, on October 26. In first position on our leaderboard with 3,375 points is N. Rowe from Tonbridge, Kent. His team, Whorlston Bunch, scored 903 points in Monte Carlo.

TO ENTER If you have not yet entered a team into our £40,000 competition use the panel, below right, to make three selections from each of the four groups and call 0994 405 001 (or 44 994 405 311 outside the UK).

THE PRIZES The manager with the best team score after the European Grand Prix, on October 26, will win the first prize of £25,000 courtesy of our sponsor Marlboro World Championship.



POS	TEAM NAME	MANAGER NAME	POINTS
1	What Ales Bunch!	N Rowe	3375
2	Farkhurst Racing	L Danson	3742
3	Waite Racing F1	P Waite	3587
4	Aston C	L Ackland	3685
5	Tetch-Meisters Racing	B Day	3685
6	Cheats	J Yao	3583
7	Mick's Maudauders	M Coops	3676
8	Team Tifos 1	P Bester	3562
9	Team Julius II	C Gale	3658
10	Millineum E	R Carville	3556
11	Fore Front Racing	E Wilkins	3642
12	Cavalino Team	F De Maai	3641
13	Darwin G P	B Young	3640
14	The Chequered Flags	A Cooper	3526
15	Sauber Sys	H Bance	3615
16	Watson Boyd	C Watson	3603
17	John Hunt 23	J Hunt	3602
18	Tired And Exhausted	P Wilson	3596
19	Prima Donna	Mis L Swinn	3586
20	Jackpot	P Droppert	3586
21	John Hunt 9	J Hunt	3585
22	John Hunt 10	J Hunt	3585
23	Lasanda	L Jones	3579
24	Speed Demons	J Hayward	3576
25	Andy's Team	P Moys	3574

How Karen rolled her own

Perry Cleveland-Peck reports from Mongolia on a turnover for the British team in the Camel Trophy

Despite the physical and psychological tests that led to their selection, the British team slipped on only the third day of this year's Camel Trophy in Mongolia.

The flip, happened when Karen McDonald, a 30-year-old firefighter from Hereford and the first woman to represent the UK in the event's 18-year history, took the concept of "off-road" literally. A combination of gravity and a corner taken at speed left her Land Rover Discovery on its side.

"I just thought, 'Oh, no. Here we go,'" said Trevor Smith, 26, Karen's team-mate and a British Aerospace engineer from Lancaster. "We rolled a couple of times and came to rest on the driver's side. Thank God for the internal roll cage."

Fortunately, the occupants emerged with nothing more than a few cuts and bruises — Karen had four stitches put into her elbow — but the vehicle came off a little worse. Now the driver's door won't open and some of the windows are missing. "New and improved ventilation", Karen put it circumspectly. "merely cosmetics".

But Karen was not alone. Of 20 national teams taking part, the Swedes and Russians have also rolled vehicles and the Greeks have turned their Discovery over at least three times. Derogatory talk was silenced when the UK team went on to win the vehicle-based orienteering stage despite their accident.

This year's Camel Trophy is a circumnavigation of Mongolia, starting from the capital, Ulan Bator. On May 13, the Prime Minister welcomed the 20 teams before leading the convoy of Discoverys to Turtle Rock, a stunning and massive rock formation to the north. Here the Mongolians put on an exhibition of archery, wres-

ting and horse riding, a gentle and friendly display by the descendants of Genghis Khan's golden horde.

After a night spent in gers, the traditional Mongolian circular canvas tent, our four-wheel-drive golden horde set off on the 2,400km route to the ancient city of Kharakorum. The route continues up to the Siberian and mountainous north of Mongolia, down through the rolling grasslands and then 1,000km across the Gobi desert. A route through two very different climates, with eight competition sites to be visited along the way.

How the teams get to the sites is up to them, but it is sure to involve a river crossing or two, ample use of the winch when pulling stuck vehicles from the quagmire and plenty of serious desert driving. Once the teams arrive, they are put through a series of arduous mountain biking, kayaking and orienteering competitions — a new addition to the vehicle-based event and one, it is hoped, that will open it up to a wider range of people. The teams carry on their vehicles a specially-built roof rack a pair of Lee Cougan mountain bikes and a Perception two-man kayak, used also to store luggage.

Watched only by nomadic herders and the occasional yak, the teams travelled 300km to the competition site at Selenge via the "Bridge with no name" that spans the Orkhon river. The landscape here is awesome — vast, undulating, unspoiled, open spaces fringed by mountains, strangely reminiscent of the American prairies. The wind, however, is chilly with the smell of snow on the air.

Route navigation from site to site is constantly monitored by the Camel Trophy judges for the Land Rover Award.

Nevertheless, morale is high. The competitors' boil-in-the-bag food is better than that served in the local hotel. Fresh food and vegetables are hard to find, though one night the team from the Canary Islands managed to buy a goat. Currently known as "the mascot", I fear its eventual fate may be different.



Smith and McDonald come up smiling after their Land Rover literally went off-road



Permahond's Chris Hollands reflects on his success

Jonathan gets his teeth into it

Tony Dawe on more bidders to be company driver of the year

A novice from Peterborough and an advanced motorist from Cambridge have won the latest heats in our annual contest to find Britain's best company car driver.

Jonathan Popple, 29, was almost speechless after learning that he had triumphed in the first of two heats at Bracknell. "I've never done anything like this before and thought I had no hope of winning," he said.

The only surprise for Chris Hollands, on the other hand, was that he had managed to pip his team-mate, Andy Price, by two points to win his heat. They both competed as members of the Permahond team last year when Andy won their heat to reach the final.

Jonathan, a sales and marketing consultant, only won his place in the team representing Denplan, the dental insurance company, after his name was drawn out of a hat. "Our office manager spotted details of the competition in Car 97 and an e-mail went round inviting entrants," he said. "I was delighted to get a place as I enjoy driving and was keen to pick up as many tips as possible." He drives 25,000 miles a year in the company's Rover 416.

"I haven't hit anything on the road for some years," he said, "but I certainly hit the cones in the braking tests and failed to find some of the defects on a specially-prepared Nissan Primera in the fault-finding exercise."

Tim Bents, leader of the Denplan team, said: "Jonathan might have made a few mistakes, but he was brilliant

on the Highway Code. The speed with which he answered some of the complicated questions amazed the instructor." Chris and the Permahond team are keen supporters of The Times/Lease Plan competition and its aim of raising the profile and reputation of company car drivers. Chris, 38, an accounts manager who drives 40,000 miles a year in an Audi A4, is a member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists and of the Drive Safe team formed by his company.

"Safety is the number one issue throughout the company and driving safely is a natural extension of the policy," he said.

Chris performed outstandingly in his heat, scoring 92 out of 100 during the on-road test, which included Highway Code questions. He located nine of the ten defects in the fault-finding exercise and dropped only a handful of points on the braking test and on the manoeuvrability exercise, which involved completing an obstacle course without dislodging a ball from a large saucer on the bonnet.

The low-speed exercise contrasted with one of Chris's other motoring interests: the Thrust supersonic car. Permahond is a sponsor of the project, responsible for bonding all the panels together, and Chris and his colleagues had visited Richard Noble, the project leader, and the car before heading for Bracknell.

Chris and Jonathan will now join four other winners — and six more yet to be chosen — in the finals at the Silverstone Driving Centre on July 4. The victor will then enjoy an expenses-paid trip to the Portuguese Grand Prix at Estoril on October 26, the culmination of the 1997 season. A team prize is also offered and both Denplan and Permahond must fancy their chances after the performances at Bracknell.



Collision course: cones go flying on the braking test

Spanish black cabs come in all colours

Vaughan Freeman learns how an icon of London has found a place in the sun

The famous London black cab was launched this week as the traffic-busting answer to the crowded streets of Spain. British holidaymakers will be forgiven a moment's confusion as the familiar cab pulls up in Barcelona, Madrid or Seville, amid the Seats, VW Passats and Ford Escorts.

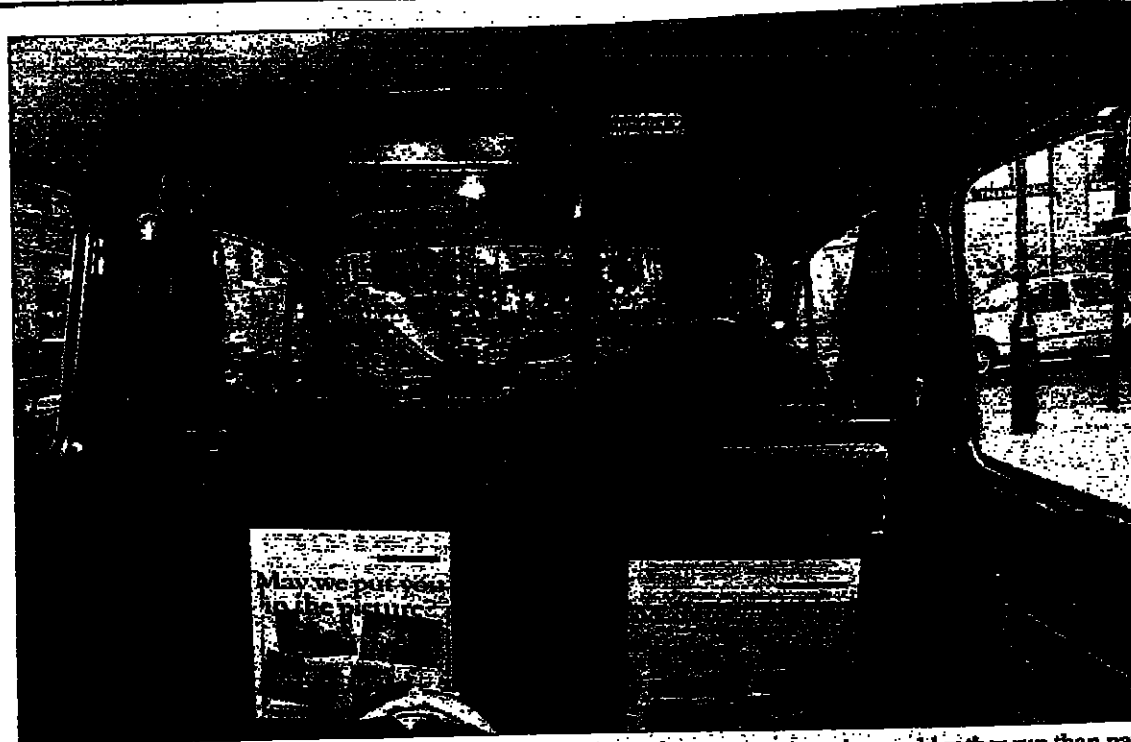
Those used to the black cab in London however will notice one or two changes. The steering wheel has been moved to the left-hand side but, far more strikingly, instead of black, the cab is far more likely to be dolled up in yellow, white, blue or red.

The unlikely British export was the talk of this week's Barcelona motor show, where it took centre stage as the Spanish importers unveiled the cab for the first time, together with details of their plans to import hundreds of the London icons.

The instantly-recognisable London cab, one of the very few purpose-built city taxis, has established an indomitable reputation for being able to

survive hundreds of thousands of miles of stop-go (mostly stop) motoring, decades of traffic jams and a lifetime of nerve-jangling U-turns. Now importer Enrique Tomas Segarra, director-general of London Taxi España, believes Spain's city motorists are ready for the ducking and diving of a London cab.

Despite a price tag of five million pesetas (about £22,000), Segarra believes he will be able to sell up to 300 London taxis a year. "We have just sold our first one in Valencia, and that taxi driver reports that he is doing so much more business simply because people like the idea of being driven in a traditional London taxi."



Fare attraction: Spanish importers like the door-lock system to deter passengers who would rather run than pay

"We are part of a company that has been selling British cars, such as Jaguar, MG and Land Rover for more than 30 years in Spain. The cabs are absolutely the same as in London, except that they are left-hand drive, have air-conditioning to cope with our heat for the comfort of the passengers and will be a different colour. In Barcelona, taxis are black

and yellow. In the north of Spain taxis can be any colour and elsewhere they will be painted white. "The image is also very important. Who does not know of the London black cab? Who hasn't seen one, or been in one? They are so comfortable, so roomy, so robust — so simpático."

The Fairway Taxi, powered by a four-cylinder, 2.7-litre Nissan diesel

engine, is built by the Coventry-based London Taxi International. Car bodies, a subsidiary of Manganese Bronze, at the rate of more than 2,000 a year. Its Spanish importers are also making great play of the cab's other main features: a six-year anti-rust warranty and its door-lock system to deter passengers who would rather run than pay their fare.



25,000 miles flat out at 140mph.
You'll never need to do it.
But it's nice to know you can.

IF YOU'RE CONTEMPLATING TEST-DRIVING A SAAB 900, think about the one it's already had. We drove one around Alabama's Talladega circuit for 8 days and nights, non-stop, flat out (that's 25,000 miles, 140mph). In the process we broke forty international long-distance records. The engine, despite our best efforts, remained undamaged.



beyond the conventional

Clearly, it's nice to know that the Saab 900 possesses such power and endurance. Better still, it's nice to know it's not beyond your means. On the road, a Saab 900 will cost you from £15,500, whilst contract hire for business users is from £199 a month. To arrange a test drive, phone 0800 626 556. And on the day, remember to observe the speed limit.

Readers of The Times can hone their driving skills at the famous Silverstone Driving Centre which has now expanded its operations to Croft Circuit in Darlington, north Yorkshire.

The special offer consists of:

- Track saloon driving £75 (usually £110)
- Single-seaters £85 (usually £115)
- Multi-activity day £250 (usually £299)

With the multi-activity day there is an opportunity to drive on track in a single-seater and race-prepared saloon, plus a skid car, Caterham 7 autotest and Honda-engined Pro-karts.

For more information, please contact the Booking Line on: 01325 722272 quoting The Times Reader Offer.

The offer applies to courses booked before July 31, 1997. The course type and date must be selected at the time of booking.

This offer may not be used in conjunction with any other offers, promotions or discounts.

SAAB 900 CD (SALOON) £15,500. SAAB 900 CD (SALOON) £15,500. SAAB 900 CD (SALOON) £15,500. SAAB 900 CD (SALOON) £15,500.

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